Third Wife

of the Muslim Shaykh Frithjof Schuon

My Lifelong Search for Truth

Maude Murray

September, 1956. Maude Murray is an ordinary student settling into Harvard University — until a fateful encounter with a brilliant, young Muslim professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, talking about God. This chance meeting thrusts her into the world of an 'unsurpassable spiritual master': none other than the Muslim Shaykh and philosopher, Frithjof Schuon.

It is only when she delves deeper into the heart of the Sufi Order, quickly becoming the third wife of Schuon, that things begin to unravel.

Murray charts the rise and fall of the Order linked to some of the finest Muslim intellectuals, like Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings and Huston Smith, who stood by their master.

The author delights readers with her exact, often humorous, observations of human life across different cultures, and provides powerful insights into her spiritual life, ending in her discovering the Truth she has been searching for lifelong.

Murray's memoir will hold particular interest for those acquainted with esoteric traditions, but even for the general reader. Third Wife promises to both edify and enthral.

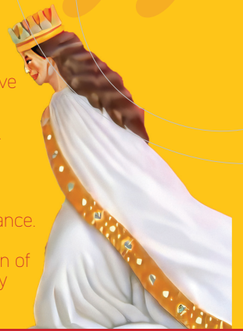
"For the first time, an insider sheds light on the secret life of Frithjof Schuon and his closest disciples - a group described by René Guénon as 'a vague organization with universalist pretensions.'"

ABOUT THE COVER ART: Here you see Queen Esther, the Jewish wife of the powerful King Ahasuerus, who, by another name, may have lived about four hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

She is approaching the king, at the risk of her life, to ask his help for the Jews, God's chosen people and the only believers in one God at that time.

Queen Esther may never have existed: Strangely, she has no importance.

The story is like a myth or an archetypical tale about God's protection of those who believe in Him. When you have finished this book, you may see why we have chosen this picture.



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For God – and then you!

In Truth, God says: "He who belongs to Me, I belong to him." I myself, and all I do is for Him, because I want to be absolutely His. To copy His generosity, I make you all my heirs. I have no living family, so come along with me through life, and take what you wish from the jewels I found, in a well-blessed search for Truth.

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PROOF

Gratitude

Everything is for God, the One to Whom *all* gratitude and praise is due. However, He does not accept our gratitude unless we honor those He sent to us, so I wholeheartedly thank my God-sent publisher, Jamil Chishti. He has been too competent and conscientious for words; but also, as a caring human being, he has proven to be so full of qualities that I could write a chapter about him! My editor, Siema Rafiq, has also been extremely competent; I cannot imagine a better editor; but she too was heaven-sent in that she is so graceful and dignified that it has been easy to put my heart in words, knowing that she was there.

I also thank wholeheartedly my daughter Qadri; my Christian sister Tracey, who I call My Diamond in the Dark; my Hindu sister Tamar; my two sisters who passed away, Hasna' and Salimah; my estranged sister Ihsan; my brother Abu Balqees; Eric de Meyenbourg, who was The Man at the Top of the Stairs; Sammy 'n Frances; Seyyed Hossein Nasr; Martin Lings; Titus Burckhardt; Leo Schaya; Thomas Yellowtail; Lucie von Dechend; Sidi Arqam, and Pumeli. I also thank those I used to love and hope to love again, with Theophilus, Theophilia, and *you!*

Last come those I love the most. If I start thinking about them too much, I'll start writing poems. Those are the nameless, self-effaced people I only met towards the end of my life.

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September, 1956

It was the first day of classes at Harvard; but I'd already spent weeks settling into my dorm and being taken to dances, with young men who were rather like ravening wolves. By that I mean that they "quite liked" us young ladies; and there were ten of them for each one of us. After that Orientation Period, I spent my first day in huge lecture halls, with about 500 students, listening to some famous professor. I detested the whole business. The professors were among the best in the world for their subjects; and the lectures were fascinating in a way. The speakers had intelligence, charm and humor; but every word and scene seemed too inhuman, dry, and sterile. I wanted to run away, but to where, and to whom? My parents were in California; I was three thousand miles away in Massachusetts, and my being there was the final goal of *their* lives—not mine!

Towards the end of the afternoon, the class was divided into small groups of about fifteen students, who met in small rooms with PhD student-teachers. As I walked into my assigned classroom, I glanced at the teacher—noticing that he was tannish-colored. "A Chinaman," I thought, and plunked down in my seat. Being 17 years old and having had no experience in life, I was a country bumpkin—quite ignorant and naïve, and faced with the wrong kind of intelligence for my type and background. Although I was bored to extinction, I doubt I looked insolently at the ceiling; but that was exactly the way I felt. The room quieted down as the "Chinaman" started talking. He began speaking about "real" knowledge, beginning with the earliest recorded writing of Pythagoras. I found myself sitting up straighter, and starting to pay attention. It was like nothing I had ever heard of in high school, or so far that day. A whole new level of knowledge was opening up, and I was waking up out of my insolent disdain for education. (Actually, I barely understood a word; but a general impression was knocking on my heart). Until that moment, I had been

unaware that there was any higher kind of knowledge. I thought knowledge was dry facts, or ideas that didn't seem sufficiently alive: They didn't give a deep enough meaning to life or death.

He used the word "truth"; but then he backtracked and said, "I mean the truth with a capital T." In one second, I was as if struck by lightning, totally changed for life. I had no idea what a capital letter stood for, or that there was an Absolute; but my whole soul, mind and spirit, heart—whatever there is inside us human beings—everything within me was hypnotized and magnetized. My hair could have stood on end. Instantly I realized that I'd been looking for something, that I'd found it, and that somehow my path lay through that man. But I had no idea who he was or what I'd found; and I had no idea that this single moment would mean that nothing in the past had the slightest importance, and that the course of my future had just changed forever.

After the class was over, I went up to the professor, and asked him: "What is the truth with a capital T?" He replied: "It is God, and He is the Absolute Good, the Beautiful, the Majestic, the Merciful... " Extremely surprised, I believed on the spot and haven't wavered since. I trust I'll die like this too. I've been through a *lot* since then, of good and bad, of grave sins and little miracles, of disappointments and the most marvelous discoveries. I'm going to tell you all about it; but first let me introduce my professor: He was about 24 years old then and he wasn't a Chinaman, but a Persian and a Muslim. He was Seyyed Hossein Nasr, now quite a well-known scholar and a Sufi master.

After quite some time, I realized that he was, during those very days, becoming a disciple of the great Swiss philosopher and Sufi Shaykh, Frithjof Schuon. I was to become the third of the four wives of that Shaykh, and I was to have many human and spiritual adventures before, during and after my marriage. I would like to take you with me on a journey through life, hoping that by the end of this book, you will feel as if you have lived several lives and learned what it has taken me a lifetime to discover.

Who, Why, Where and How?

"I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support…"[1]

Anne Frank

Who are you, who am I, and why did I write this book for you?

You are Everyone! Many of you are believers in God, by any one of His Names, in any religion; and included among you are the intelligentsia—people of great mental or spiritual strength. But some of you are people who think you don't believe in God. Maybe you're only curious about subjects that seem strange to you, like Islam or polygamy. Maybe you want exalted truth, or maybe you wonder about simple people who seem so good. Maybe you feel awake, as if you can see things, so you have questions. You're looking somehow, someway, in any old way you can, for the unknown. That's the way I was when my Real Life began, at age 17.

I'm writing this book for you, and you could be anyone.[2] I have been through something, loved something, and learned something that concerns everyone who is interested in any level of human existence. If you only want

1 Written on her thirteenth birthday, 12 June, 1942, this fateful phrase marks the beginning of *The Diary of Anne Frank.*

2 Anyone *adult*: This book is not for young people.

to be a good human being, you have a human story before you, with the sins, graces, successes and failures of someone who has had an unusual life. I'm writing to tell you a story; but I'm hoping that at least one sentence will give you a spark of light, a glimpse of the Truth with a capital T, to make you at least realize that there *is* a God, that He *is* the Truth, and that He cares about us—all of us.

In a very real way, some stories like mine, concern everyman. We are all searching, struggling with storms and facing great temptations. Sometimes we feel trapped between impossible choices; or we see something real, and think, "This is impossible!" If there's a difference between your search and mine, it might be that I believe everything until it's proven wrong, whereas most people wait till something is proven to believe it. There's a mystery with a good ending though: For those of us who believe easily, and trust in the Lord through thick and *thin*: *He* always makes us *win!*

Who am I?

I'm an old lady, who feels as if she's been everywhere and seen everything, during a blessed life, full of adventures—human and spiritual, devastating and marvelous, sinful and miraculous—living in different countries and knowing very different kinds of people: People of every color, nation, religion, and level of wealth. Also, and strangely, I feel as if I should talk to you confidentially, as if I were writing a "Dear Diary" kind of book. That's because I happen to love practically everyone, and my nature is to be "inclusive." For example, I actually loved being one of several wives, and we had a custom that's dear to my heart: The triple hug.

Although I'm talking to "Everyman," I myself stand for what's spiritual, not material. So I prefer wisdom to wealth, God and everything spiritual, to anything material. And I have a dozen special reasons for talking now, in particular; but I'll tell you those reasons further down.

By destiny, I've been rich and poor, well-loved and humiliated. I've met a king and a queen, a princess, diplomats, and hundreds of highly intellectual and/or wealthy people. Also, over a lifetime, I've probably had good talks with some hundred taxi drivers, from about every country in the world. Those can be the finest people, who are driving cabs to survive in foreign lands. Just a detail: One turned out to be a terrorist, who scared me to death, whereas another recommended my seeing a fine psychic healer he knew. That man could see one's bones through the flesh and saved me a year of expensive physical therapy. He was the size of three men put together, and let me imagine what Goliath could have looked like!

I forgot an essential point up there: Some of those people were very good, whereas others were really bad. Some were good, but with an upsetting streak;

and others were bad, or oh-so-boring, but with some endearing quality. In general, the rich were stingy; and fairly often, the worst people were in charge. You will meet the exceptions with me, and you'll hear me praise the Lord. In case you're curious, I've also known gifted and honest psychic healers, along with some convincing and dangerous fakes.

When I was wealthy and had servants, I spent nights in their houses; and the many times I had a truck driver move my belongings, I sat up front and got to know him. From the age of nine, I've been fascinated by people—their characters, personalities, and lives. Although that began with reading a thrilling novel about a tragic situation, which of course, ended well, I finally read only about holy people and Prophets.

There's another really special thing about me and people, and it makes me widely accepting, loving of you, who want to read my story. Remember in the Dedication, how I quoted, "He who belongs to Me, I belong to him."[3] That is the attitude of God, who gives Himself to us if we give ourselves to Him. Well, I try to be like that too: If someone wants to be friends with me, I never say no. Sometimes (you'll see) that's gotten me into hot water; but one shouldn't become hardened, trusting no one anymore.

Another unique thing about me and this book, is that we both—the book and I—are real. What I mean is that I *am not perfect*, but sincere and honest. I'm no ideal person, who describes her greatness; rather, I want you to see how merciful our God can be when we (you included) set out to find Him, with sincerity—even if we fail, fall, lose our tempers and our minds, go astray and sin. *Nothing* can keep us from finding Him, if *He* is what we want. What I write, the doctrines in here, could have mistakes: I've meandered in a maze without much guidance until old age; but I'm trying to share some essential ideas with you about how to find the Truth.

A great master of Islam is Ibn Arabi. He said that if you want something from God, you can have it; but you'll lose Him. If you seek only Him, He will be (entirely) yours. That saying is for a certain type of people though—my type, the ones who want to be absolutely God's. However, God includes everything: One loses nothing by having *only* Him![4]

There's more! I'm an American, and I'll never get over it. On other sides of the world, there are many people who love America, Americans and their

3 This is absolutely true; but it is not a *hadith qudsi*. Abu Hurayrah said: Allah the Almighty said: "I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a cubit, and if he draws near to Me a cubit, I draw near to him a fathom. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed." Another possible rendering of the Arabic is: "I am as My servant expects Me to be." The meaning is that forgiveness and acceptance of repentance by the Almighty is subject to His servant truly believing that He is forgiving and merciful.

4 One can pray for what one wants; but in realizing that only God knows what that is, and in being submitted to His Will.

frank personalities—but they also love money and comfort: All they want is to visit or live in the materially blessed US. But finer folks "out there" make fun of us Americans for being so narrow-minded, sure of ourselves, materialistic and crude. We have no culture; and compared to most, we have no discipline either. What's worse is what happens when an Occidental like me enters a relatively unknown religion—in my case, Islam. You'll see what a hard time I had; but you'll also see what incomprehension there can be between people from opposite backgrounds.

Now, I became a Muslim, and I know why I chose Islam. It is the last and final religion, including all that came before it. However, it may be enough for you to see that Islam is true. At least you will witness the God of Islam's helping me. I am not trying to convert you.

Who knows how many religions there are? Who knows how many races and kinds of people there are? And who knows what's true, good, and beautiful? You, me, or who?

Come to think of it, only God can really know; and He has spoken in revelation—telling us what to believe and how to live accordingly. But this gets really complicated! Lots of people think He *only* spoke in the Bible, and lots of others think He *only* spoke in the Quran, in the Torah, or in the Upanishads… and it gets worse! People are even divided about interpreting their own Scriptures. And even worse than that, there are levels of interpretation, and endless disputes on all sides! And from the outside, there are those who barely believe in anything, but who are struggling. Who can teach best about God, truth, existence, people and everything? God Himself, of course; and He does that in revelation.

As for why anyone should talk now, don't we all notice that there is trouble everywhere? Believers are killing believers in other religions, due to both ignorance and ill will. How are they killing one another? With "swords" obviously—in wars, in politics and in economics; but also with words, narrowness, lack of understanding and lack of virtue. Believers are killing one another due to ignorance and lack of compassion. So guess what? If this goes on, no one will be left on earth except people who only want to have and not to share anything—not knowledge, not wealth, and not love. Only those who want everything for themselves will be left, unless we all come together in peace. One reason I'm telling this story is to make peace, and I'll try to do that in some original ways: You'll see good in places you thought were bad, and you'll recognize… well, let's say "less than good" in places you thought were nearly the best.

A big problem today is that everyone thinks God spoke only for him, and that each one has a right to his own ideas, no matter what God said. In an

airport, by chance, I met a lady who invented her own church, and I know a man who invented his own religion. Someone will dye his hair purple, and another will ride a horse in New York: There's a thirst for individual expression that is going insane, and if you travel with me, you'll get a sense for all this bizarre diversity, the kind that's caused by us human beings.

That above is about *false* diversity. A vase has fallen to the floor: All that's left is useless splinters of glass. I'm praying that we will, all of us together, come to love the *real* diversity, created by (Guess who?) our Creator, the Only One!

Imagine an ocean. Do you see all the kinds of life that are in it? Look at the things that are not alive in there too; then imagine the surface of that ocean. There are waves, right? Tidal waves, and big, medium and little waves, even invisible ripples: Those would seem to be alive if you could see them, dancing on the surface of the sea. They appear for a moment, then off they go; returning back into the ocean they came from. Those waves reflect all the colors of the rainbow; they may seem to dance, or to have power. There seems to be endless differences of every kind in the ocean alone.

Then look up! Suddenly, you may see the very rare kind of rainbow—a rainbow around the moon! They are rarely seen, except by sailors at sea; and those round rainbows can also "talk." They too "speak" about diversity, in a different "language" than the one spoken by the sea. One rainbow I saw, on a misty night in Switzerland, had round layers of every color coming in and fading out, delighting the beholder, like the waves upon the sea.

A particular thing about me is that I have always wanted to know "What was on the other side" of every fence and wall, so I've gone to find out; and destiny allowed me to travel, so I'll tell you what I found; then you can travel yourselves, in space or in books.

Up into the great pine tree,
Who would climb, but curious me!
I'd hold the trunk with both my hands,
And look abroad in foreign lands.
Once I saw a distant garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more,
Than I had ever seen before.
If I could find a higher tree,
Farther and farther I would see;
And I'd invite you all to come with me!

After a lifetime, I'll share my conclusions with you, but basically, I can tell you now: There are two ways of making peace—of creating a true unity out of

a warring diversity: One is with Great Knowledge, and the other is with Much Love, or goodwill towards all and malice towards none. I have spent a lifetime trying to obtain a tiny bit of Knowledge, and I finally found some of it; but it's *really* hard to share, and I sure had a hard time getting anyone to share it with me. There are reasons for that; but I'll try to explain a little about True Knowledge, with the help of scholars and people who have realized the Truth, but not through the study of books.

However, at the end of my life, after searching for the Truth, I'm so surprised! There are many people who don't *need* much knowledge to be at peace in a world of differences! They live as compassionate, kind and tender-hearted folks, wherever they are, and whatever their faith may be. When Christians actually *live* the way Jesus lived, there are no problems with Muslims, when those Muslims live in accord with true Islam.

Why have I written this book?

Many have dismal views of both Islam and Sufism right now, largely because of other books and stories in the media, which are based upon ignorance, prejudice, and many other negative things. The existence of the anti-Islamic, diabolic "ISIS" is being *used* by malevolent and/or ignorant people to promote prejudice too. And then add books by several Occidentals, mostly women, who have had bad experiences with some individual Muslim, and then left Islam—adding fuel to the fire of ignorance and prejudice. Such books become popular because they contribute to the preconceived and abysmally unknowing ideas of the masses. Nearly every group has bad people somewhere—be they Muslims, Christians, Americans, Siberians, Hindus or Vegans. To blame a revelation for a bad person, mistakes the essence for the accident, or, in easy to understand terms: It's plain stupid! I want to be a witness to the fact that Islam and Sufism are perfectly true, and that the God we all worship takes care of us if we want Him in our lives and hearts.

Once I was invited to a Thanksgiving dinner with many American, Christian missionaries in Pakistan. Although I really liked them, and was dying to be friends, I saw that the feeling wasn't exactly mutual. Well, I didn't feel at all that they didn't like *me*; but the fact that I'd become a Muslim 55 years earlier, and at Harvard University, was a bit much. They must have realized that I was no subject for their missionary zeal, as I'm a regular fire of faith in Islam—albeit I love Christians, Jesus Christ and reading the Bible.

In exchanging views, I realized that they were being "tolerant," and had been taught a false Islam. And they were not taught by Muslims, but by other Christian missionaries! One of them thought only Christians were saved by grace, whereas Muslims have to pile up good works. But not at all! No Muslim, not even the Prophet, can go to Paradise without the mercy of God.

Works are not enough. Later, another Christian wanted me to read a horribly distorted book comparing Islam (and ISIS!) to Christianity. It was written by a Zionist, and published by a group of Christian Jews in the US. If you want to learn about a religion, you should start by talking to those who follow it, not strangers, who see from outside.

I also want to warn Occidentals, who adopt relatively unknown religions. There are some very weird things "out there"—such that one needs to know one's new religion well, and only trust those who teach what God Himself says in revelation. The Prophet once said: "If someone among you sees wrong he must set it right by his hand, if he can (deed, conduct, action). If he cannot, then by his tongue (speak up, verbally oppose); if he cannot, then by his gaze (silent expression of disapproval); and if he cannot, then in his heart. The last is the minimum expression of his conviction (faith, courage)."

In Islam, knowing one's religion, must include the Sunnah and the Shariah, according to all the great Muslims who have ever lived, and beginning with Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.[5]

Finally, I repeat: I'm too rich in my old age, not to leave a Last Will and Testament. All I have is Knowledge though; and you are my heirs. You're welcome to take whatever pleases you.

Why are there several religions, and why so many stars in the sky?

"Mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know one another." (*Quran, 49:13*)

From the Quranic verse above, we can see the importance that Islam places on acquiring knowledge; and human diversity. Our being created in the form of diverse "peoples and tribes," was for a purpose. We were created different, so we would go through the test of getting to know one another. Will we say: "I hate colored people, or Hindus, Muslims, or Ethiopians?"

Also, the Messenger of Allah said: "The wise saying is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it then he has a right to it." (Source: Sunan At-Tirmidhi). I'm a Muslim; but that hadith means that I have the right to benefit from the words of Moses and Jesus Christ, as well as all wise people *everywhere*. In fact, a Muslim cannot go to Paradise unless he accepts Jesus, His miracles and His miraculous birth, the superiority of the Virgin Mary... *and* Moses, Elijah. It's endless; but many Muslims don't take this seriously and say *the* dumbest things! I'm very sorry!

5 We will say, but abstain from writing, blessings after names, for the convenience of Western readers.

However, "the wise saying" is not *only* the heritage of believers in Islam: It is the heritage of the whole of humankind. You and I should acquire wisdom wherever it is found. We should be open to acquiring wisdom from people of other faiths and cultures too, because any truth, no matter where it is found, is from God. That's my personal attitude, which comes naturally to me; but I found out that it's also true! Moreover, although it's too long to go into this, there's a hadith, which means that although I am a Muslim, if I truly love Jesus Christ and His people, I can be in the Christian heaven *too*, when I die. Actually, I want to be in *all* the "heavens," because I love God and *everything He has done*—all the paths He made to lead us back to Him. Re+ligio means "re-link" man to God. Ibn Arabi wrote: "So contemplate the fact that the *hierarchy* of *mankind* in their *knowledge* of *God* is their very hierarchy in terms of *their vision* on the *day* of *resurrection*. So *beware* of being *bound* by a *particular belief* and *rejecting* all *others* as *unbelief!* If you do that, much good will escape you. Nay, you will fail to obtain the true knowledge of reality."[6]

The human side

Now, come back in time with me, and then maybe we will have a *human* kind of understanding, in case I didn't convince you above, *intellectually*. Once I saw Billy Graham, the great Christian Evangelist, talking on TV. His host said, "Are there things you don't know, questions you would ask God in Heaven?" Billy Graham said that he would ask God why He created so many stars in the sky.[7]

Now please come further back in time with me: I was working at The Islamic Society of North America, in the United States, and it was announced to us employees that one of us would be invited to a Revival of Billy Graham's. A newspaper reporter would go along, and write an article for the newspaper about the reaction of a Muslim to a Revival, which is quite a phenomenon in Christianity. Billy Graham traveled all over the world, gathering crowds larger than most people see in a lifetime. Naturally, I was dying to go, and no one else was free, so off I went in the company of the newspaper reporter.

Scene one: The reporter led me to my seat, way far up high in a football stadium. There I sat, next to a pious Christian lady, a Born Again Christian devotee of Billy Graham's. For me, there was only one important fact: My

6 William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds.*

7 There's a French proverb, "*Comme père comme fils.*" That means "As the father is, so is the son," and that calls attention to a truth: Father and son often *do* resemble one another. In this book, I'd like you to learn to discern, and there's another proverb: "All that glitters is not gold." Subtle hint: Billy Graham's son does not resemble him as do two drops of water! Neither does the son of Charles Stanley resemble him; and a Christian Evangelist may be almost great, but include one heretical doctrine like "Eternal salvation," which means that once you're a Christian you're saved no matter what you do. That's dangerous. You will see these ideas in Islam too.

companion, that Christian lady sitting beside me, loved God. So did I. Dear friends, that was all that mattered for her *or* for me: We loved one another straight away, and I'll never forget her heart—hoping to meet her again in the Next World. We had *no* problem between us, due to one single love: God.

Then the stadium filled up, and onto the stage came Billy Graham. Oh dear! My heart melted! He was so humble, human and natural; and he was talking about his love for Jesus Christ. Well, I've always loved Jesus too; all Muslims must love Him. We have to. He is in the Quran; but when you have the privilege of hearing an inspired and living teacher, like Billy Graham, your love for Jesus Christ increases by leaps and bounds. Then came the sermon: As a Muslim, I agreed with every single sentence except one, and I decided to forget about that. The rest was identical, so our one difference didn't seem important. My Christian neighbor was following her star; I had mine.

So why have I taken you on a wild goose chase, when I started way up above, only talking about why there were so many stars in the sky? And you must wonder why I couldn't agree with Billy Graham, on only one sentence, too. Didn't you wonder *which* sentence?

Well, I'll tell you now, and this isn't just my opinion, but it would take a long time to prove that. There are many stars in the sky, *and* there are many religions (more than we can know, since Adam) because God is not limited: *He* has endless imagination, and He wants us to see that.[8]

One star is enough for someone to be guided in the night; but you have a choice as to which one to follow. It's the same with religions; we have a choice. It's a test for us, and in the next world, He will judge us, and tell us why there are so many stars, and why there are so many religions, races and nations.

So, what, you may ask, is the sentence I didn't agree with, that Billy Graham said? And why is there no peace, even among us believers, in the world? Jesus said, "None cometh unto the father, but through Me." He did not say that everyone must be a Christian;[9] but *everyone*, Christian or not, *must act* the way Jesus did *or* he cannot reach God and *heaven*.[10]

In Islam, there is one verse in the Quran, and one hadith, which cause the same problem. Later, you will meet these conundrums with me, in the

8 Ibn Arabi wrote: "Beware of becoming delimited by a specific creed and disbelieving in everything else, lest great good escape you... Be in yourself a matter for the forms of all beliefs, for God is wider and more tremendous than that He should be constricted by one creed rather than another." (Fusus 113) "He who counsels his own soul should investigate, during his life in this world, all doctrines concerning God. He should learn from whence each possessor of a doctrine affirms the validity of his doctrine. Once its validity has been affirmed for him in the specific mode in which it is correct for him who holds it, then he should support it in the case of him who believes in it." (Futuhat II 85.11) Now for Muslims only: That is not *all* that Ibn Arabi wrote; but you can find out all you need to know by reading books in the Bibliography.

9 If one knows about a great Voice of Truth like Jesus Christ, one cannot reject Him either. I don't know all the ins and outs of this; but Muslims *must* believe in Jesus.

10 Heaven is called Paradise in Islam. In Christianity, Paradise is replaced by Heaven. I use the terms loosely throughout, assuming we have readers from several faiths.

course of life. Meanwhile, know that I have a Hindu and a Christian sister, and I myself, like many who know too much about diversity—none of us could un-know or un-love diversity; but no one is obliged to follow more than *one* star. *In fact*, it is absolutely forbidden to actually practise more than one religion. If one mixes them, all hell breaks loose. You'll see what I saw later on. In other words, if you're a Christian and I'm a Muslim, we can be related, love one another and learn about each other's ways; but we can't follow more than one star. I'll teach you about Islam, due to goodwill, to help create peace and understanding; but feel safe: I love your love for Jesus Christ. I love and understand you so much, that I feel like saying, "The Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you!" Now Muslims: Are you alarmed? I will show you a hadith later. فصبر جميل والله المستعان "Patience is beautiful, and it is God, Whose help is to be sought."

So why talk now?

And why me? Well, it isn't just me at all; many people are doing what they can in quite different ways. I'm talking too, because the world really *is* coming to an end,[11] there's hardly any truth or goodness anywhere, so reform is needed and *lots* of people have *got to do what they can*, *and talk*, *now!* I haven't time, especially at age 80, to beat around the bush. I've got to tell my story frankly enough so you can make up your own minds. At the risk of my life, I'm volunteering, and that's for the sake of our Lord (He's my Lord and yours), and it's to help you. There's tragedy ahead, and warnings—but with miracles, mercy, stories about precious people, and many amusing things too.

Do you know the story The Emperor's New Clothes? That's a short tale written by the Danish author, Hans Christian Andersen; and it's so intelligent, yet simple, that it's been translated into over 100 languages. Basically, the story is that two weavers promise an emperor a new suit of clothes that they say is invisible to those who are unfit for their positions, stupid, or incompetent. In reality, they make no clothes at all. Everyone believes the clothes are invisible to them, because they go with the crowd and submit to the views of the emperor, who's in charge. Well, when the emperor finally parades before his subjects in his new "clothes," but is really as naked as the day he was born, no one dares say a word! Suddenly, a little boy cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!" Most people who know that story, want to be like that child, and speak up. Me too; but realize that I am not alone! That tale reminds people of a fact: Sometimes, somebody has got to say something to end a great delusion, and it's likely to be the least of those present who will talk! I'm quite willing to accept being the least; but I want to get the job done!

11 See Appendix V: Muhammad's Predictions About These End Times We Are In Now.

And have you heard of Chicken Little? Many barn animals were friends, and they all had funny names like Chicken Little, Ducky Wucky, Fish out of Water and Foxy Woxy. Well, one day, an acorn fell on Chicken Little's head! Thinking it was a piece of the sky, Chicken Little created a stir; warning all her friends: "The sky is falling; the sky is falling, and the world is coming to an end! Run, run!" But all the others made fun of her. Much later, something really serious actually *did* happen! Chicken Little made a lot of noise again; but not one creature would believe her. So they all got taken in by a plot concocted by Foxy Woxy. But Chicken Little was saved… let's say she was saved by God. She heard a cock crow, and so naturally, being a chicken mind you, she knew it was dawn. She went away to lay an egg, and therefore, she was the only one to be saved. Our Lord has mysterious ways!

That story, like The Emperor's New Clothes, has many versions and interpretations; but you will see why I've told these two stories like this. "An elephant in the room" means the same thing. You'll understand better as time goes on. This is only the introduction here, but I'll give you a clue. There are great reformers in religions, sometimes Prophets or saints, or great political reformers. All I'm trying to do is to warn and talk to my fellow humans, as simply as Chicken Little talked to her fellow barn animals. She was *way far off* to start with. Oh my! She said, "The sky is falling", when only an acorn had fallen on her head! But later, something really serious would come. I want you all to be ready, so Foxy Woxy won't catch you too. Many a creature has already fallen into his trap. It's a real tricky one; I got saved myself, so I want you to know all the tricks, and you should believe me—even though you'll see that I too, just like Chicken Little… *got everything wrong in the beginning!*

There are people in here—notably my husbands (yes, plural) and sister-wives, who I criticize, but I do not know how they died! Will they be in Heaven or in Hell? I'm hoping to love each one the way I did before. I'm not allowed to say what only God can know. Maybe I'm too hard on someone who changed. The lesson remains valid and God will judge us later.

In general, this is a real book, about real people, with their real names too. In exceptional circumstances, I've "veiled" someone, because he is alive and still has a chance; or I've hidden someone due to respect and not being certain I was right. A few periods of my life have been left out too, because they aren't important for you. Rarely have I changed a name. That's because I may have had dreadful experiences with someone, but I don't want to hurt them publicly, because they may have had other qualities with other people. Otherwise, you're looking at a story told by the little boy in The Emperor's New Clothes. He was too young to be worried about what others thought; but I'm old: Still we resemble one another like two drops of water, because I don't feel sophisticated enough to do anything but tell the truth.

Notice a fact throughout: Whenever anyone did anything wrong, he or his people blamed the ones who noticed it and talked to correct it! That is one reason most people don't talk. Oh dear: I can't help myself. Even a chicken got blamed, because she had been wrong the first time. She said, "The sky is falling!" In many ways, it really is right now, here and today.

Just begin the story whenever you want to. You'll learn slowly with me, and hopefully your path will be more straight than mine. There are delights, miracles and humour on the path, along with tragedies and perfidy; but with such marvelous compensations, that I hope you'll all be happy to have lived *two* lives: Yours and mine. Let's put this matter to sleep for now. Come! Travel through life with me. Our seemingly separate paths may meet at the end of the book.

PROOF

Chapter 1
Sammy 'n Frances

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference."

Robert Frost

Once upon a time, a little boy named Sammy, lived in a railway car, with his family and several rare birds. The birds played parts in the circus, run by Sammy's father, a con-man and an alcoholic. Sammy's mother rode bareback, standing up on a white horse, and Sammy, being quite intelligent, was dressed up to look like an encyclopaedia. The audience could ask him any question, like "How high is the Empire State Building in inches?" Sammy always gave the right answers, because his father cheated, placing dummies in the audience.

No one believed in God; but Sammy told me much later that he really did believe in fairies. You see, his best friend was a colorful cockatiel named Rex. Sammy had so much love for Rex that he took him everywhere, on his shoulder. Now one thing that helped Sammy believe that Rex was a fairy, was that his father kept the cup of birdseed in his pocket. His change would fall in there; then his three children would find money in the bird's cup; but Sammy was the only one who thought Rex was a fairy. He had little education because he was always traveling in that railway car; but finally, his father died of alcoholism, and Sammy grew up, becoming a self-educated man.

Being quite bright with numbers, he got a job working as an accountant in New York City; but unlike the other members of his family, Sammy was looking for something—not God, but something more real than being an accountant in that immense and inhuman-seeming city. Quite unlike his father,

he had a zeal for honesty, integrity and kindness to people and animals, so people like Abraham Lincoln were his ideals.

One day Sammy went to a flower show, in which various architects and landscape architects had placed model homes with lovely miniature gardens around them. Fascinated, he decided to change his life, so he wrote to some of the exhibitors, saying that he would do manual labor, practically free, if someone would teach him about plants, gardens and landscape design.

Soon, behold! He got an answer from a lady architect named Frances. She had agreed to teach him all she knew, in exchange for his help. He left his job as an accountant, and was soon picking up Spanish by doing manual labor with Mexican immigrants, with whom he got along fine. Although he was slim and unused to labor, he outworked everyone, because he was so smart about placing his whole weight behind each thrust of his shovel. Actually, Sammy was some kind of a genius; but he was far from being recognized. That genius of his wasn't limited to physical forces, like how to increase one's strength in digging trenches, or in engineering—although he would become an engineer. Sammy was a genius with words, for happiness, for fatherhood, and for bringing out the best in children.

After his laborious days, Frances, a professional architect and a skilled engineer, taught him all she knew—about plants, design, architecture and engineering. She was a difficult woman, prejudiced, overbearing and argumentative; but she was worth it. Sammy married Frances, and they were my atheistic parents. I doubt either one would have used the word "atheist" though. And Sammy had some trace of the supernatural in him, going back to his instinct for seeing something special in his friend, Rex. When he was 75 years old, he started praying; but I'll tell you all about that later.

Sammy was no materialist, from childhood. He always believed in something that can't be seen. A fine example of a real materialist was Khrushchev, who led an anti-religion campaign in the USSR (and who, significantly, is dead)! He said he had sent space explorers way up high in the sky, all around everywhere, and there was no God up there. As for anyone who isn't as far gone as Khrushchev, one can hope. Actually, when he explored outer space, Khrushchev didn't see hope either—or love or goodness, and he was so poorly brought up that he didn't thank his Creator for space and the ability to fly in it. These days one doesn't see Khrushchev up there either!

There was something Sammy and Frances always had in common: They never took the usual roads! Since they were both intelligent, original and talented, life with them was full of mystery and adventure. We lived and moved with imagination. I was allowed to have things, like a horse and many pets, and to do things that were unheard of for other children. There was something like a colorful, vibrant and large "space" to grow up in. I thank them wholeheartedly in my old age.

Sammy ‘n Frances both adored me, but fought constantly. My mother always wanted to be in charge and she was full of prejudices—liking to dispute about politics, and always causing trouble. On the other hand, she was gentle, loving, and had an inimitable sense of humour, without knowing a single joke. She was talented too; as was he. They never could quite stay together, nor could they stay apart, if only because of me. But it was also because they were both so gifted and interesting. There was no one else around whose company either one liked.

An idyllic time of life

Have you ever heard of a good, old-fashioned, idyllic childhood? There was an ice-man, who brought a huge cube of ice to keep our fridge cold for a week; a horse-drawn cart drove by, full of vegetables; and there were acres of woods, with ponds and swimming holes behind our big, previously abandoned, old house.

When Sammy and Frances had first seen it up for sale, our house was a run-down, abandoned hotel. In the backyard, a hobo had built himself a shack. He lived there with a chicken. When they bought the house, my parents made the hobo a new shack somewhere else; but his chicken stayed with us.

That chicken would come and peck on our window, to get me to come out. Then I’d pour cups full of dust and dirt on it. Happy—with me and with that dust bath—it would shake all its feathers in a cute way. Much later I read that such baths are excellent for getting rid of little bugs that love hiding in chicken’s feathers.

Somehow, my father took to calling me “chicken” too; and even when I was nearing fifty, we both remembered that. So he wrote a poem (one of his hundreds, just about his love for me):

I used to call my daughter “Chicken”
or “Maudie-Chick,” I’d simply say.
But NOW, she’s all grown up,
and my hair’s turned grey.
Somehow “Chick” or “Chicken” just doesn’t seem proper,
So now I just call ‘er “MAUDIE-POPPER!”

That was all artistically decorated, and I once had a stack of such poems; but as is common with us spiritually-minded people, I had a “fit of virtue” and gave them all away, so as not to become sentimental. Another time, when I was young ‘n charming, I painted my mirror black. Then I had to go to the Harvard University Library restroom every morning, to put my lipstick on! I still wanted to look pretty, and finally had quite a hard time scraping that

black paint off the mirror in my rented apartment. About 60 years later, I met a man who had done the exact same thing! Us spiritual folks can be somewhat nutty; but you'll be able to figure that out for yourselves as time goes on. Far from thinking little of spirituality though, I'm just trying to help you readers get used to it now, with a light spirit, because… well, you'll see.

Since my father designed gardens and my mother was an architect, they practically re-built our museum piece of a house, and we had flowers everywhere. I also had an ideal, little pet turtle, named "Peek," short for peek-a-boo; four or more outside rabbits at a time; a cat, a dog and some frogs.

When my father fell asleep on the sofa, change from his pocket would fall out, and get in between the cushions. In that change were silver dollars; and I knew from the maid, Hattie, that one could buy a baby rabbit for one dollar (probably to eat). Anyway, I approached my father. "If I just happened to find two silver dollars, could Hattie buy me two rabbits?" Home came two little white rabbits, named Snow White and Rose Red. I waited years for some "results" but there never were any. Still, we had them in one roomy cage. An enormous Belgian Hare rabbit lived in a regular "rabbit's room," and we had several other rabbits, free outside, all named Squeaky. Those last ones were free; but they came when called, and I remember looking into our garden. Sometimes my mother would be walking around our well, in a long dress, carrying Tommie, our cat. Behind her, a rabbit would be traipsing along. My childhood was ideal; but sometimes I used to go away alone into the woods. I didn't know why; but later I'd realize that I'm a very friendly person, who needs to be alone.

Once, I was upstairs and heard a noise of galloping hooves. Rushing to the window, I saw a horse galloping out of the woods and through our garden! Certain that he was sent for me, I rushed outside to catch him; but of course, I failed. He was a runaway, and was duly lassoed and taken home. Do you remember how Sammy had some tiny sense of the supernatural, when he believed that Rex was a fairy? I was like him, and my parents read many books to me—apparently meaningless—but adding much to my imagination and allowing for originality. All the Uncle Remus stories, Doctor Doolittle and myths like the one of Pegasus, the flying white horse: They opened my mind. What is priceless though, is stories from scripture and the lives of the Prophets. Nothing is more dramatic and fascinating than such true stories. As a child, I never heard of those; but I'm grateful for what I got.

Like all children, I was horse-crazy, but unlike many others, I was adored my whole life, and spoiled to death. That can make one strong inside, and I was going to need that; but for the moment, I'll just tell you: I was promised a horse if I got 60 "A" grades in school. Since that was impossible, my father was in no danger of having to fulfil it.

Our house by the woods, was in Arden, Delaware, which was an adorable country town then, with an outdoor Shakespearean theatre, and a whole

block of nothing but wild grass. Everything was idyllic; but once I stole something—having no moral sense yet—and I got hail Columbia! Several times some young workman exposed himself to me in the toolshed; and I heard that some of our neighbors had suddenly disappeared: They had been spies! A typical American childhood back then; but these days children are hardly given the chance to notice strange things. The idea of normality seems strange now.

One day, I was out driving with my daddy, when we saw three bedraggled-looking people with a dog, walking briskly on the sidewalk. He pulled over and asked them where they were headed. "We're fruit pickers, headed for Illinois, where the cherry crops are ripe," one said. So my father offered to pay for them to take the bus; but no, they couldn't do that, because no bus driver would let their faithful dog on.

So he told them to get in our car and we drove for hours, while getting to know them. Two, pretty old, were married, and the third was their 80-year-old friend. He could read, always had the Bible with him, and taught them. Since they'd all been fruit pickers their whole lives, they'd become extremely close friends; and their dog was quite included in everything they did and ate. Those people were angels, and neither my father nor I ever forgot them and the radiance of their piety and plain human goodness. At age 75, when I finally got him to pray, the first event that came into my father's mind was how we had learned from those three old people.

Another time, we were driving along, after a big rain. Hundreds of beautifully colored turtles had some reason to move to the other side of the road; but drivers neither swerved nor stopped, so lots of turtles were getting squashed. My daddy pulled over and gathered up masses of turtles in his coat, before carrying them to the other side. Once they were all safely delivered, on we went.

Yet another time, he took me with him to a big nursery to buy trees. I was in the backseat, pretending to put powder on my face, as my mother had given me a powder puff, and I was enchanted with it. When we pulled up to the owner's house, there was a man on the roof, painting it with tar, and then laying down new shingles. On that man's back was a pet monkey! Fascinated, I pleaded until I was allowed to go up there and introduce myself to that unusual pet. Well, it saw my powder puff, and obviously liked it! Regretfully, I gave it away, hoping to become friends; but the monkey dipped my dear powder puff in that can full of liquid tar, and ate it!

Then I went back down and waited interminably as always happened when I went with him; but at the end, the nursery owner showed us an enormous black, Belgian Hare rabbit, in a small cage. The man's children had grown up, so would my father let me have it? Off we went, on our way home, with "Blackie" on my lap. He got a huge cage, built on grass, and adored us—running around in circles for joy, when we went to visit him. Later, Blackie even got shipped by train, poor thing, when we moved to California. When we

brought his crate into our new living room, he ran around in circles due to seeing us again. Our cat, Tommie, also had that privilege, and purred up a storm when he saw us that day.

At age ten, just before we had to leave Arden, I'd already been babysitting a lot. In people's houses, I saw books, and albums full of family photographs—some pictures were of the mothers, naked, and all else imaginable; but I didn't tell anyone! My parents would have refused to let me babysit anymore. In those houses, I found books my parents would never have had. Without realizing it, I was learning a mile a minute about people, and character. It was only due to destiny; but I was learning in *many* families' houses—not just in my own home. Later I'd learn by living in several countries, knowing people of all races, religions, and degrees of poverty or wealth. You'll be coming with me.

One day I was babysitting for neighbors, who were later found out to be German spies. They had a gripping novel called *Leave Her to Heaven* by Ben Ames Williams. Although horrified, I kept reading it each time I went to their house. That book has now been made into a movie, and the author is famous. Back then, I don't know if the book was well-known or not; but it described a type of character I'd meet much later in life. At that time, decades later, I would remember this book, but be afraid to conclude that I was seeing something along the same lines. The book was about a jealous woman—so jealous that she caused the deaths of everyone her husband loved, be they children, men, or relatives. Who they were wasn't important; she just wanted all his love for herself. In the end, she dies or kills herself, and arranges the evidence so that her husband's new wife will surely be convicted of murdering her.

Now I'm trying to take you with me on an adventure, so I'll come back to that book again, when we've "grown up together," you and me. It's hard for me to keep secrets, but one learns best through time. That's one reason that old age is blessed. At 80, I feel like an old tree, in the late autumn of its life. My leaves have been filled with sunlight, and they're all over the ground. I'd like you to see them in warm, autumn colors. When I read that book, *Leave Her to Heaven*, my tree had just been planted. Maybe you will find the same things in your life. I mean that one can learn from negative—even somewhat creepy—things, provided one's intention is to be good and learn. How could I have known way back then, that I'd grow up to be fascinated by people, their characters, personalities—and their destinies!

When I was ten, Arden, Delaware, my hometown, didn't seem like a good place anymore. Our dearest neighbors got a divorce, and my parents were having a hard time earning a living. Since the ground was frozen all winter, no one thought of making gardens or building houses; so we were barely managing by shopping only at the Goodwill and The Salvation Army, where everything was second-hand and cheap. I didn't understand for decades, but it turned out that my mother, who came from a distinguished family, had married beneath her.

She was capable of dealing with anything though. My father, self-educated and brought up in a circus, had gypsy blood or something. He would work for a few years, and then decide to be a poet or a sculptor. Both Sammy ‘n Frances were dripping with talent.

The decisive factor in our leaving Arden was the Ku Klux Klan. None of us actually saw anything; but we heard of them setting fires outside the homes of people of color, and riding with their heads covered in black: It was too spooky for words, but had no effect on me. I sure noticed that my parents, agreeing for once, had a foreboding impression of evil. Although our house had become lovely with the years, and we had gardens, woods behind our house, and many pets for me, they could not abide the thought that anyone would dream of harming someone because their skin was black. Since my mother worked as an architect, and didn’t take to being a housewife anyway, we had Hattie, an African widow, who took good care of us and our house, as if we’d been her very own. The thought that anyone could be mean to such a person—well, that was too much.

In spite of that, I was astonished later. When I told my mother that I’d decided to become a Muslim, she turned into a hissing snake—revealing all her prejudices against all people who weren’t of our color and our ideas. But my father was so open-minded that he wouldn’t have cared if I took to standing on my head and eating yogurt upside down.

As for Sammy ‘n Frances as a couple: Those precious and original parents of mine were at the end of their ropes with each other already, when I was ten years old. My ever-difficult mother had to be included in her husband’s work, which she’d try to control, while alienating clients. On the brink of separation, they decided we’d move to California and live with her parents for a while—or leave her there. I didn’t understand it; but alas, I nearly killed my mother one day, by asking her if a little girl could choose to live with her father in case of divorce. I had no idea she would know what I was referring to. She was sensitive, tender-hearted, adoring and gentle; she also devoured knowledge and wanted us to seem distinguished. In those days, there were little libraries in every tiny town, and she read every book in the one near us. My father was not a low-class kind of person, but living with her snobbishness brought out the worst in him. She called him an “upside-down snob” and I lived in the middle of their class conflict.

Finally, we sold our house and traveled by car from Delaware to California. Naturally, we had our dog, Jiddy, with us. When there was a hurricane, Jiddy and I got wrapped up in a rug and put on the floor in the back, while my parents braved it alone on the front seats, with two wheels of the car in a ditch, to give it more stability. After several such adventures with nature, and others with people both good and bad, we arrived in Palm Springs, California, a hot desert town, where nothing grows but palm trees and tumbleweeds. There are

also strong, hot winds. I wept due to the oppressive climate, so they took me to a lovely place called Riverside. We were still in transition. There were tears, and talk of divorce. My idyllic childhood in Arden, Delaware, had come to a grinding halt. But in California, I would start falling in love.

PROOF

Chapter 2
Falling in Love

"*There's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip!*"
Ancient proverb

That's an old English proverb meaning "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," and the moral is that you may fall in love many times before falling in love with the One Who created everyone you love. My first love was the ideal woman: Miss Burdett of Riverside, California.

She owned an immense expanse of wild land, and had countless horses, donkeys, goats, cats and chickens. In a big enclosure, on a long chain, she also had a coyote she had saved as a pup. He adored her and jumped up, licking her face when she went in to see him; but he couldn't survive in the wild, and she was rightfully wary of letting anyone else near him.

There were children and young people all around—mostly those who paid $1 per hour to ride for miles, by the streams and in the mountains, in the desert areas and in the woods. Other children, like me, were just left with Miss Burdett all day—to help her, to learn, and to play freely with the animals. For me, it was seventh heaven.

She was rather old, not pretty at all, had never dreamt of marriage, and was rather a woman cowboy; but she was my ideal. And I had friends there. One was a snow-white colt named Sugar. Although he was too young to ride, us children could play on top of him. His coat was soft and long, and he was patient with us, and with the chickens, cats and dogs, all of whom seemed to be under Sugar's hooves.

Another good friend was named "Quicksilver" by me. He was a donkey with a talent for slithering under fences—an essential skill for my getting him

out for our walks together. I'm not sure Miss Burdett knew how we wiggled out together, but the rules were pretty relaxed around there. That was one reason I loved the place, and her.

Soon my quarrelling parents came to some kind of agreement—for my sake, I think—and we all three, plus Tommie, Jiddy and Blackie, moved into a little house they bought in San Marino, California. After all their arguing, moving, separating, and such, we were not prosperous; but I was settled in a good school and had some new girlfriends.

One day, it occurred to me to count the A's on my report cards. Oh my goodness! I had passed 60! My father had promised me a horse! Never once did he break a promise, always prompted to be scrupulously honest, after seeing the catastrophes caused by his con-man, alcoholic father, who ran a circus. So I could have a horse!

The next thing I knew, we had found Miss Burdett again. She lived far away then; but we phoned her. Did she have a $60 horse? She had one we could have at a bargain price, because he had one white eye. Otherwise, he was a young and handsome strawberry roan, a sorrel brown, frosted with white. Well the next thing I knew, my daddy was paying for the truck-like thing to bring him to us; then he was paying for his shoes from a blacksmith, and for the ton of hay that got dumped on our little strip of land... and nothing was left for a saddle! So off I went with my mommy to the Goodwill. By miracle, we got a Native American saddle blanket and a wide strap. I'd have to ride bareback, but I had a horse! He got named "Frosty."

We lived in the foothills of the low mountains of Sierra Madre, which stretched endlessly before our eyes. Although most of the land was wild, there were big fields full of Concord grapes, so I could go off with Frosty, taking nothing; but we both had grapes, sometimes apples, and wild avocados.

After wandering everywhere, we found a fence with a "No Trespassing" sign. Not easily dissuaded, I got us through or around that area and into other territory. Lo and behold: We found a ghost town! There were abandoned cabins, with broken furniture and pieces of old newspapers advertising things that hardly existed anymore, *and* there was a horse racetrack, old saddles, bridles—all I could want—but I took nothing.

After we (Frosty and I) had made several visits up there, a local sheriff caught us, or me; and I got a royal scolding. Never did I dare go back; and years later, when we lived elsewhere, my father took me back to have a look. All the grape orchards were gone. There were housing developments everywhere—with each house having one tree in its front yard. Being the daughter of an architect, I noticed that the floor plans were all the same; but those identical houses were turned in different directions, so they *appeared* to be different. The modern world had arrived, right after my idyllic childhood. My heart's first love, for the ideal woman, who lived in nature, came to a close.

My next true love was the first boy I met!

There was a boy my age, living quite near us. Of course I fell madly in love with him, and that seemed to last for decades. But he was not even aware I existed, and when his family moved, I walked miles to see him (but with the excuse of visiting "my friend," his mother)!

Our tiny house in Sierra Madre was special, in that it was on the grounds of the largest wisteria vine in the United States. Its owners had planted all kinds of fruit trees: Pomegranates, cherimoyas, avocados and persimmons. Then, when the wisteria vine, which covered several acres, was in bloom, they held festivals, served meals outside, and sold lots of wisteria honey. It was actually a lovely place to live, and not so commercialized as to be a distraction.

Since my parents still fought tooth 'n nail, in between needing each other's company and qualities, I used to go away from home and sit alone on a little hill, that seemed to overlook the world from on high. There, I invented imaginary farms and people who got along in peace. Lifelong, I'd look for hills, closets or mountaintops—any kind of a hermitage. You see, some people are born with a sense that the material world is real; others have an instinct for immaterial, spiritual realities. Even the beauty and scents of flowers, may seem more real and important than material things.

Secretly, there were other loves in my life. Not only did I love one boy; I had also adopted an imaginary brother, named Mark, and a sister, named Martha. Before falling asleep at night, we would all fly to various places—often where there were autumn leaves to play in. I had begged and pleaded with my parents to have a brother or a sister for me to play with, without realizing that I'd been born by Caesarean section, when my mother was 42—*and* she'd nearly died too. When, somehow, the idea sunk in, I proposed they adopt Zoey, my first girlfriend-love, an orphan who went to my school. They said that if they did, then I couldn't go to college. Although I didn't care a whit about college, I forgot the whole thing.

Then I fell madly in love with a kindred spirit!

In my high school, there was a boy named Andy, who was extremely intelligent, and he was sensitive-looking, too. The son of a great physicist, he was obviously headed for some exceedingly intelligent career—and for some reason, I was in love with knowledge and intelligence. (Actually, he is a renowned physicist today, as was his father when we were in school together). For the time being, what kind of intelligence he had didn't count. Discombobulated though, I saw that he adapted to modern teenage language and manners, whereas I was a misfit.

And, while he was excelling in science, I was taking literature and art classes. In one art class I drew a charcoal portrait of him: Not the real him, but the person I imagined him to be. It was the picture of an exceedingly sensitive and thoughtful young man. In his expression, one could see pain in observing something. Actually, it was the world he was seeing, and it wasn't a picture of him; it was a picture of my painful spiritual state—it was a picture of not knowing that there was a God, and finding no meaning in life.

That portrait won a prize: A scholarship to art classes. But I had a big problem with art: I had no idea what was worth drawing! So my interest and talent came to nothing. Before one can manifest oneself by using any talent, one needs to know what one wants to express, and that means one needs a religion, a philosophy. (Re-ligio means relink man to God, and Philo-sophy means love of wisdom).

Anyway, one of my English teachers was quite impressed by that unusual portrait. When the time came, he wrote a recommendation for me to go to Harvard, and that was the reason I was accepted, whereas my best girlfriend, Yvonne, was refused. She was first in our class and I was 29th; but the boy who was the light of my life, the one in the portrait, Andy—he was first among the boys. Only he and I went to Harvard, and we were seen in the local newspaper together!

After dating my best friends for years, Andy finally called to ask me out. My ever so dear father answered; but since I was in the backyard, he called out for me loudly, shouting: "MAUDIE-POPPER!" Then when I realized who it was calling, I died a thousand deaths. Getting called "Maudie-Popper" seemed quite embarrassing. That young man was the king of the world in my eyes. You'll see: There would be many another king!

I did actually go to a dance with him; but I loved him so much I could hardly talk. I gave him my glasses to put in his pocket so I'd look prettier; then I said how nice it was that there was a pool there. But it turned out to be a bluish-green table! Then he took me home and we sat in the car outside my dark house, talking about college.

In those days, boys usually kissed a girl goodnight; but it's a good thing he didn't, because I'd probably have fainted. Finally, I got out and he drove away; but our house was locked! I had to climb in through a high, back window, wearing a fancy prom dress.

After the idyllic childhood (with no mention of God) I told you about, the time came for me to go to college, and for once, "Sammy 'n Frances" saw eye to eye: I must go to Harvard. That was due to sheer, but naïve, ambition and worldly desires for their beloved daughter. As for me, I didn't care at all; but they applied *for* me or something.

Only Andy, of all my high school classmates, went there too. Once I caught a glimpse of him walking across Harvard Yard. By then I was magnetized by

spirituality and philosophy; but I thought I'd confide in him, hoping he would like to be friends: Maybe we would still walk together. I sort of mosied over to where he was and said, "You're interested in physics; but I've become interested in *meta*physics!" I really didn't even know what that was yet, and he surely realized how naïve I was by then; but he was polite—and after some years, he married a friend of mine, Françoise. I realized he had been a figment of my imagination.

To be accepted at Harvard, I had to have an interview with a woman graduate. Acceptance depended upon one's grades, a recommendation from a graduate like her, and from one or more high school teachers. So there I was sitting opposite a sophisticated, worldly-seeming woman—nice enough, quite intelligent-looking, but a kind of person I'd never seen before. She asked me a smart, all-encompassing question: "Why do you want to go to college, and what do you want to be when you graduate?" I had no idea! I was just doing what my parents found best. From somewhere, words came out: "I want to know what a good person is, and then I want to be one." I think (well, we all know) God heard me longing for Him, because soon I was sitting in a room opposite a great knower of God (and a knower of everything in the world, too) at Harvard. I have no idea where those words came from; maybe I'll tell you at the end of our journey, because I'm still learning. One thing is sure: God is the final cause of everything; we can't even long for Him, unless He calls us first. That's why there's never anything to be proud of. (Actually, *He* loves *us*: That's why *we* love Him and want what is True, Good, Beautiful...).

Practically every girl I met at Harvard had been first in her high school class; I was 29th! My best friend, Yvonne, had been first among the girls in our high school; but she was refused, so we were desolate. Why was I accepted then? It was maybe because a wise sentence had mysteriously come out of my mouth in that interview, but it was mainly because I had been so in love with that brilliant young man, Andy! In my imagination, he was a spiritually sensitive person, searching for the meaning of life. So much had I loved him, that I'd drawn that portrait of his face in charcoal—a portrait showing such sensitivity and intelligence, that it won a prize. But the essential thing was that it was the reason I was accepted at Harvard, and that led to God! You see, one of my English teachers had gotten a glimpse of that portrait, and it was mainly his letter recommending me that I became an exception, in spite of being 29th in my class. Some Dean was interested enough to let me in. Maybe it was the "Dean with the half-glasses," who would be my friend later.

PROOF

Chapter 3
Here Begins a New Life

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Matthew, 7:8.

Too overwhelmed to do more than look!

We both went to Harvard; but it would be a long time before I'd run across Andy again, and I actually forgot all about him: He was only a star that had set. The sun had come up, and there were things to see! I saw the streets of Cambridge and was transformed for life. Neither "Sammy 'n Frances" nor I had any idea what a great adventure they were giving me. Although I hadn't any prejudice to start with, I was instantly rid of any hint of it, and my first impressions would last for all the years to come.

I remember a stately, saintly-looking Russian Orthodox priest, with a long beard. Later I'd get to know him. There were such noble-looking Africans too, in gorgeous clothes that looked so superior to mine. And then I saw groups of shy-looking women (the first shy women I'd ever seen) in Malaysian dress. Without knowing who was from where yet, I got an indelible impression of the superiority of traditional cultures—albeit there were no words for it at the time. Anyway, humbled by the sight of those people, I would not have just off-hand said that Americans were the cream of the crop, as I'd unconsciously thought. The people I was seeing looked so noble, dignified, and artistically arrayed, that being an American was a shaky idea; but there were no words for it then. Today I'm astounded by the narrowness of my fellow citizens. That

means some of you, so you see why I'm dying to share my adventures with you. Oh my heart! Today, I'm still remembering the coal black faces of noble men in astonishingly beautiful African dress!

Those were of a race I'd come to love; but if they shut their eyes you couldn't see them in the dark. The African race was to become my favorite, and I would later live in Africa—only in North Africa, but I'm proud of it.

For decades, that vision of the world would split my parents and I asunder; but you needn't necessarily go through the same separations. Knowledge and experience can help you avoid such things. You may realize that at the end of the book of *your* life; and in any case, I'll share what I can with you.

Only once had I seen a foreigner before. Once a good man from India had come to our house selling vacuum cleaners. Being hospitable, my parents invited him to lunch; and then he invited us to his house, where we sat on the floor and ate with our fingers. I had an impression of a colorful culture; but that was all I'd known of the world, before my first day in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

One thing that happened during my four years at Harvard was, strangely, that I came to both respect and disrespect intelligence and knowledge. A fair number of my co-students committed suicide, and many were brilliant but unbalanced or immoral. One slim, sleek, vibrantly healthy and handsome young man told me he wrote PhD theses for $5,000, and Master's theses for some lesser amount. A certain "eminent-religious-majesty" was supposed to be in my classes; but a slippery-looking character went for him. I'm not naming him, due to fear of God; but I did not have a good impression. May God forgive me if I'm wrong. Some people should be respectfully veiled, even in a real book about real people.

There was a well-loved teacher of medieval history, Professor Taylor. He was known to be a saintly person; so, after hearing that God indeed existed, I went to a few of his classes. He radiated gentleness and humility: In fact, I'm not sure I saw those two qualities so clearly in anyone else in all my time in Cambridge. (Later, I knew a few other saintly people—several Muslims, one Christian, and one Native American). When I finally got married, my husband, who was thirty years older than I, had also gone to Harvard, and he too had noticed the grace of Professor Taylor.

The professors and students were the cream of the crop from around the world, so Arabs came to study Islam and classical Arabic with Sir Hamilton Gibb, a kindly man, knighted by the Queen for his outstanding knowledge of Islam. Although I was practically a zero compared to his other students (including the Agha Khan) he was kind enough to let me pass his majestic classes in Islamic Institutions and Arabic. He could teach truly classical Arabic too!

Have you ever seen a real scholar? Well, he sure was one! He knew every single thing and why it mattered. Once some bright student asked him a hard

question. Thinking out loud, he mentioned what a dirham was worth in say, 600 AD, and if you think that's unimportant, it isn't at all; the answer led him to tell us profound things about Islamic institutions! We all thought he was secretly a Muslim, but no; he gave himself away once, with a single sentence. He was knighted by this present Queen Elizabeth; now why? The relationship between the UK and the Muslim world is a mystery further than Mars for the likes of me. Many of you must know, but I'd rather not say.[12]

One professor, in addition to the saintly one, remains in my mind to this day, and remembering him is like a prayer. I expect he's in heaven now, due to his kind and merciful heart. He was the teacher of one of my Arabic classes. When it came near time to graduate, I hadn't fulfilled my language requirement, so I could have been stuck, interminably, unable to graduate forever. Since I'd only been interested in religion from day one, French seemed a bore, so I failed it twice. Wanting to be a Muslim though, I'd thrown myself into learning Arabic; but no one had ever passed his language requirement in that! I decided to try to be the first one.

The day came: Praying my heart out, I sat in a little room, and that professor placed a piece of a newspaper article in front of me. How he thought I could read that is beyond me. It was way out on Pluto compared to the kinds of Arabic I'd studied, and I couldn't read a thing! Of all the nerve, it even had the French word for eggplant in it, in Arabic script, and I didn't know it in French. But that merciful professor was walking around behind me, saying, "Try this" and "Do you see the quadrilateral root?" It was a catastrophe! He made me pass though; and I've never forgotten his mercy and kindness for an outwitted young lady! He wasn't only like that towards me; he had an irresistibly kind air about him. In Islam there are *ahadith* about people who were saved or damned due to some act of theirs that revealed their true nature. A woman, who may well have performed her religious duties, went to hell for torturing a cat; whereas a prostitute was saved because she was so kind as to give water to a thirsty dog, in her shoe. You surely recognize this principle in your life.

Looking for something

When I arrived, ignorant and naïve, I met my classmates. They had already published books, knew other languages and had traveled around the world, or else they were world-renowned artists or musicians: I was the only unqualified person I met there. I felt that; it made me humble, but I still didn't take much to any of the other girls. At the time, I had no idea why, but now I know: It was as if their lives were over and nothing could be added; they weren't looking for goodness or truth. In a way, their books had already been written and closed,

12 My idea of what a real scholar is would change dramatically later on in life.

whereas I was a blank sheet of paper ready to be written upon. That sounds conceited, and there were surely fine souls among them; it just wasn't apparent back then. One finds that the strangest jewels come back at the end of one's life: Buried, unnoticed treasures, people one had thought were insignificant—they come back as real people, quite unlike what one thought. Maybe some of those old classmates are yet to appear again, or maybe they're wonderful, but hidden in a place unseen from where I am.

All during the orientation period, I was miserable, but I didn't know why. The boys were ravening wolves, and there were ten of them for one of us; but it wasn't that. Without realizing it, I was looking for That Mysterious Something or Someone, so I was excruciatingly lonely. I wrote long letters to my best friend Yvonne; she wasn't looking either, but at least she was content with being a pious Catholic.

Well finally, after two weeks of an orientation period, mostly involving Harvard boys and dances, the first day of classes came: I sat in huge rooms nearly all day, with 500 students and famous professors, full of ideas; but as the day went on I thought more and more that I wanted to run away. I didn't see why anyone wanted to be educated: There was no life in the knowledge. And in my mind, I was writing another letter to Yvonne. She and I were so close that we were *both* madly in love with Andy! So was yet another good friend of ours! He really was a special person, and maybe today, he is what I'd imagined him to be. In great novels, one sees that people may play a role in another's life, which is quite different from the individual's nature. Strangely enough, us three friends all loved the same young man; I don't remember any jealousy though; and at least, Yvonne and I were like two birds on a branch. Later, I'd be one of three wives, then four—and I loved my sister-wives so much that… well, I can't tell you how much; but I can tell you why: My sister-wives were remarkable people!

Magnetized forever!

At the last minute, I went into the smallish room I told you about at the beginning of this book, where a rather tan-colored professor had already begun speaking. I thought "Chinaman" and sat down, feeling like looking insolently at the ceiling, because I'd been about educated enough for this lifetime. Now I told you about this before; but I'm reminding you, because this was a momentous time, and you too may have had such moments in your life.

My meeting Seyyed Hossein Nasr that day, really was the beginning of a Real Life.[13] His words, "I mean the truth with a capital T..." meant that God

13 Editor's note: There are several ways to explain why the author had such an extreme reaction to the capitalization of the word Truth. The simplest is that she is a "pneumatic"—someone whose nature is predominantly spiritual. This is a complex concept, because being a pneumatic does not necessarily mean

exists, and that He is the Absolute Truth, the Good, the Beautiful... I had no idea what those words meant when he said them: I had to ask him after class; but the instant he said those words, I fell *absolutely in love*, and my heart, soul and spirit were magnetized forever. My hair could have stood on end, and absolutely everything changed inside me. That only marked the beginning of a search that would last until age 80; but everything that was past, plain ceased to exist, or became so unimportant as to be like the stars eclipsed by the rising sun. Miss Burdett, the first boy I'd loved, Andy and Yvonne—they were all less than shadows. The day I met Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the sun rose in my heart! Never will I cease being grateful to him and to God.

The world ends!

Ever since I heard of God, I'd been so intent upon learning everything about Him and the ways to Him (religions: re+ligio means re-link man to his Creator) that I'd been skipping all my classes that weren't about Islam or Arabic. Therefore, my grade average was extremely low. I didn't care, had no idea why I should care, and never bothered to tell my great professor that I was spending all my time reading the lives of saints and Prophets down by the Charles River.

Meanwhile, back in California, and after I'd been living in a dormitory for a year, my mother let me know that "Sammy" had finally broken free: The day I left for college, he had moved out! They had kept that a secret from me until our lovely house was sold. Then she had no life, no one to live with or to take care of her as she grew older. So of course I said, "Come here. We will rent an apartment and live together" (till death do us part). That decision was made instantly; it was necessary on my part, but tough, especially as I was steeped in spirituality and she was some shade of atheist.

After she came, I'd have a double life. At home I'd try to be at peace with her, while having another life at the University. Whenever Dr. Nasr mentioned a saint or a philosopher, I'd rush to the library and try to read everything about him or her. One was Sri Ramana Maharshi; and for some reason, I was tremendously impressed, while not understanding a word he said. One night, before an exam I was going to fail, I paced up and down all night, saying, "There was a man named Sri Ramana Maharshi. He lived upon a hill, called Arunachala." I was 17 then: When I was 80, I somewhat understood him! What my mother thought—now that was beyond me. Fortunately, she didn't ask many questions. We both kept to ourselves, while living together.

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that one is good, and much of the trouble in the world today comes from the corruption of such people, who have to find their way, like everyone else.

My only friend, the brilliant Ilona from Latvia, was like me in a way: The difference was that everything was an intellectual exercise for her. Although I was a million miles behind her, I wanted to *live* what we were learning. She was a shining star, brilliant; but my heart wanted to belong entirely to God. On the way to my goal, I'd "fall in love" with, or practically worship, everyone who talked about anything spiritual; but Ilona remained cool-headed.

After she and I had had two years with our great professor, I just happened to run across him in Harvard Yard. He actually deigned to talk to me; but my delight was short-lived. "I will soon be returning to Iran, where I will be a professor of such and such in such a place." Dumbfounded, I just looked at him: Had he no idea that what he said meant the end of the world for me? I managed to ask, "So what's to become of me?" I mean, how could he do that, just casually announce that the world was ending?[14] Until that moment, I'm not sure he realized that for me, at that time (I say "God forgive me" now) he was "The Way and the Truth and the Life." I'm a naïve person, who rarely underestimates anything; but if you haven't noticed it yet, I practically deify people who teach about God, and I literally thought he was the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! Well, he managed to deal with me, by saying that I could be guided by his close friend, named Sidi Yusuf. I had seen Yusuf in classes: He was a PhD candidate, quite likeable, benefic-looking, short in stature, and about as round as he was high. My heart was calmer.

There was a "detail" only a mountain high in that conversation: Seyyed Hossein Nasr advised me to become a Catholic! He explained that it would be almost impossible for a woman alone to live in the US as a Muslim. He said I'd never get married, couldn't keep my money in a bank and couldn't eat meat. Those were his ideas at the moment; he did have some reasons, and he would change, but I rushed to the nearest Catholic Church to begin instruction. Yusuf was my friend, a dear person, and much more friendly than the great Dr. Nasr, who was an as yet unmarried young man when I met him. Maybe that was the whole reason, I'm not sure; but Dr. Nasr was extremely reserved and formal with me. That did improve later when he was married; but decades later I saw a prejudice against women—not all women though. He did admire great women scholars; but he did not have much imagination for an "existential" type of intelligence. For good reasons, that type of intelligence is hard to define: It's intuitive, and does not necessarily come with an ability for discursive reason.

Yusuf was a good human being and quite lively too. Once he and I were walking to a café on a street teeming with students. Along came a "shouter"—a lady crying out, "Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming! Prepare to meet thy Lord!" She passed right under his chin, imploring him to believe. He calmly told her,

14 Most people would realize why I thought the world ended that day if they read *The Vision of Islam* by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick.

"I know He is coming." She looked up at him, surprised; but went on her way, still shouting excitedly.

Well, Yusuf spoke the truth: All Muslims do know that Jesus will return to rule the world. That's when there will be so much peace that the lion will lie down with the lamb.

The best man in the world was coming!

Dr. Nasr said he was planning to visit my mother and me before he left the country. So, wanting to honor such a great man, I thought and thought: How could I thank him enough with some symbolic going-away gift—not diamonds, but a symbolic present I could afford? There was nothing to do but buy heavenly fruits and give them to him in a simple straw basket. So off I went to the biggest and best fruit market, far away. In Boston's outdoor market, there were about fifty stands of heavenly-looking fruits of all kinds; but what caught my eye was the cherries. They were large, dark, ripe and perfect. I paid; but got nearly all inferior ones. So I bought more—saying I wanted the ones on top.

"I'll pay extra." This went on. "I'll pay more; whatever you ask; but I must have *only* the best ones from the top!" I went to different stands and offered there too; but there was no way that anyone was going to give me all the cherries from the top! I stood in the middle of that market and wept my eyes dry. It was impossible to get anything heavenly on earth! Finally, dried out by my own tears, I wended my way home with the best I'd managed to get, having eaten and discarded many mediocre ones. The basketful of fruits was still pretty impressive; but it was a heavy and awkward present for a big family about to load all their possessions onto a boat. I hadn't considered that.

Oh wonder of wonders! As Muslims will do, he did come, and with his mother, brother, and several cousins too. Thinking his mother must be like the Virgin Mary, I sat humbly at her feet, trying to think of wise questions for a holy mother.

Way off in a corner of our large living room, my holy Professor caught sight of the portrait I had drawn of Andy. He was captivated by that, and said it showed "spiritual malaise," meaning it showed spiritual uneasiness. It was that look on Andy's face, which had gotten me accepted at Harvard, although I wasn't qualified in the way most of the women were. Once there, at Harvard, I'd meet Dr. Nasr right away, and my spiritual malaise was cured. That portrait, he saw in the corner, was a picture of a state of soul, which God had sent me to him to cure! Although he, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, was leaving me there alone (and I even thought I'd never see him again in my life) he had fulfilled his purpose in my life: I had found God! That portrait had no meaning anymore;

and soon after he left, I just gave it away. That old life of painful searching was over: A real life had begun!

Dr. Nasr had come that day with a present for me. Having such reverence for him, I opened it with wonder. To my astonishment, it was a Christian book, called *The Way of a Pilgrim*. As soon as he left that afternoon, I began reading it so avidly, that you could say I ate the pages. That was some book! Sixty years later, I still have the Bible and *The Way of a Pilgrim*, lovingly kept in my room.

"I love not those that set!"

It's too obvious now, but I sort of worshipped one person after another. First, in childhood, my whole life revolved around Miss Burdett, the lady who had a ranch full of animals. Then it was the boy next door; then I fell madly in love with Andy. Now, at this point of the book we are with Seyyed Hossein Nasr. I was not in love with him; but I almost thought he was God. Well, I hate to tell you: He was not to be the last one. But I am far from being alone. Many of you must have this tendency; but you are not quite aware of it. People tend to worship some kind of idol, if they don't know enough to worship God. That's because their hearts feel empty—even when they have much love all around them. Teenagers have photos of their sports and movie heroes on the walls of their rooms... but they should have noble ideals.[15]

Hear about Abraham:[16] In the Quran, there are stories about different phases in his life. As a child, he was hidden in a cave, because little boys were in danger of being killed by the ruler; but finally, when he did go out, he saw the stars and he adored them. When they set, he was disappointed, saying, "I love not those that set." Then he saw the moon! That was the best thing he had ever seen, so he adored the moon. But it too disappeared when the sun rose. Convinced that the sun was the ultimate reality, he adored that—until the time of sunset! Then Abraham was finished with worshipping created things.

These days many people worship money, power, fame, sex—any material thing or pleasure. They also fall for ideas, like progress, success, science, technology, nationalism, health, sports, and safety. Let's talk about one: health, as improved by science. There was a famous physicist, named Linus Pauling, a Nobel Prize winner. According to him, one could and should have tremendous amounts of Vitamin C. He wrote about that, proved it scientifically, thrived

15 Those pictures are actually forbidden in Islam. Muslims and Jews are not permitted to have images of living creatures.

16 He, Abraham, is the father of the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims: We have the same father in Abraham, and the people of all religions have the same father in Adam. If one hates white, black, red or yellow people, then one is hating one's own brother; and we all bleed red. Abraham's first born son, Ishmael, was the forefather of the Arabs, and Abraham was the physical and spiritual father of all the three who brought the three religions called "monotheistic": Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

on it himself, and died of cancer. I met him once. Then there was Adelle Davis, a nutritionist so famous that her books sold over ten million copies. Billy Graham, the most famous Christian Evangelist, may have had only three and a half million followers. Why such a difference? That's because the vast majority of the people in the world today are materialists. They believe in taking care of their bodies, which is fine—we should—but they exaggerate because they're afraid to die, and they want physical comfort in this world, not stronger faith. Today, the majority rules, so if you appeal to the majority, you can sell books or sell anything, and become rich and famous. But there's a problem: the majority is nearly always wrong! The reasons for that are clear and many, but too long to go into. "And if you obey most of those in the earth, they will mislead you from the way of God." (Quran, 6:116).

The great nutritionist I mentioned above, Adelle Davis, died of a very complicated kind of blood cancer. Then there was a Frenchman who cured many, with all kinds of natural water therapy, like walking barefoot in the morning dew. Guess what he died of?!

Scientifically, there are many reasons for concluding that we would all be healthier, and more compassionate, if we didn't eat meat. Well, maybe some people would be—at least in this world; but God said that he created animals for our use and the most holy men have ordered us to follow their example. So you can stop eating meat, sure; but then you're slighting what God said. In the case of Islam, you're in big trouble, because Muslims are ordered by God to take Muhammad as their role model. (Incidentally, many Senegalese live on meat, and they often live to be 100–130). There are many things, facts and ideas, that none of us have ever heard of, so let's not be narrow-minded. Shakespeare was a genius about people and ideas, and I love a certain line in one of his plays. There was a half-baked, narrow-minded philosopher, named Horatio, who had invented his own philosophy (like we all do if we haven't a revelation to follow). A wiser character says, "There are more things in heaven and on earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in thy philosophy." (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*).

The diamond pin

After eating the pages of the precious little book Dr. Nasr had given me, I decided to spend the rest of my life saying the Prayer of Jesus, which is described in there. It's the true story of a Russian peasant, who became passionately desirous of understanding a line in the Bible: "Pray without ceasing." (Thes. 5:17).

Do you remember that I saw a Russian Orthodox priest on my first day at Harvard? Well that book is about a Russian Orthodox saint, so I kept my eyes open and finally saw that priest walking through Harvard Yard. I caught

up with him, stepped alongside him, and politely asked if he would be my spiritual guide for saying the Jesus Prayer. He didn't seem too enthusiastic, and said something to the effect that I'd soon give it up; but he was willing to instruct me. (And I didn't give up ever; but God often changes our roads)!

Soon we reached his office, and I sat beside his desk, looking at his bookshelves, overflowing with big volumes, pamphlets and loose papers. I caught sight of many books by the great philosopher, Frithjof Schuon. He was the one Dr. Nasr always praised without limits! Curious, I asked the venerable Father if he liked those books? He answered, saying that they were extremely interesting, but not true. I assumed he said that because he was a Russian Orthodox Priest, and Frithjof Schuon's first book was called *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*. By then, I was used to the idea that most people do not admit the truth of any religion but their own. So he was narrow-minded: Nevermind. I just wanted to get on with my spiritual life.

I absolutely loved that Jesus Prayer: and that was when I was planning to become a Catholic, because Dr. Nasr had surprised me by dissuading me from becoming a Muslim. In *The Way of a Pilgrim*, that prayer is so well-described, with its merits, its fruits and the best ways to benefit from it, that I decided to run away from home—devoting my life to reciting it. All I actually had of my very own was a little diamond pin, given to me by my grandmother. All else was "ours": My mother's and mine. So, with that pin in my pocket, no purse, and no coat, I walked all the way to Boston. I thought I'd sell that pin to a pawn shop, use the money to buy a new dress (to change my life, symbolically) and take a train as far as I could go. Then, I'd knock on doors until I found a job as a maid. I'd rent a room, buy bread and salt, and live the way the Russian pilgrim did.

Quite tired after a four-hour walk, I went into the first pawn shop I saw. The owner was suspicious! He thought I'd stolen the pin and demanded identification. Of course I had none: I thought I could walk out of my worldly life with nothing, and soon survive on bread and salt! Then he threatened to report me to the police, and he said the pin was only worth $100—much less than I'd counted on. Worst of all: I remembered my mother! She would die of grief if I didn't come home for dinner! After I'd found out that my father had left her, I told her to come and live with me. My being home for dinner every single night, without a good safe reason, was essential for her peace of mind. I had lost sight of that awful fact; but turned around and went home, defeated. I spent four more hours walking home, with the pin, and without a cent to pay for a bus, taxi, or anything. It still seemed like a good idea, basically; but I'd have to wait until my mother passed away: I could never cause her the grief of losing me.

It's needless to keep telling you, but I was quite naïve then, and still am. That was partly thanks to Sammy 'n Frances. They lived outside of "the world,"

usually in country towns. Being talented, they were happy with their lives on the margin, with me—only us three, in our own little nest. Strange as it may sound, there's a special kind of intelligence in naïvety, and Frithjof Schuon wrote a fine article or chapter on it. I've never felt the need to read that, being quite preoccupied with the other kinds of intelligence I lack—likely your kind! Naïve people can have a hard time getting along in the world. One can and should manage; but it's impossible to survive with naïvety, except with trust in God. One has to try; but success only comes from Him, and sometimes after falls. Another book could be written on that; this one you're reading is just an illustration! A secret: God never deceives naïve people who trust in Him. When others deceive them, God always steps in and helps, sooner or later.

Muslim or Christian?

Yvonne was a pious Catholic—a "Catholic-only" kind of Catholic, whereas I had just passed four years of being steeped in the knowledge of all religions. So there I was, looking at a narrow-minded Catholic and a broad-minded Muslim, in practically "the same breath!"

A certain Father Sheehy instructed me in Catholicism; but after I'd learned, he refused to baptise me, precisely because—although I did accept Catholicism, I still believed in Islam and in other religions too! These days, one may believe in other religions while belonging to the Catholic Church; but back then, that wasn't allowed. Anyway, almost no matter where I went, I seemed to bang my head against some kind of a spiritual Great Wall of China: The Catholics did not accept my believing in Islam also, even though I was perfectly happy with becoming a Catholic. And although one Muslim had advised me to become a Catholic, another Muslim, Dr. Nasr's friend Yusuf, would later categorically deny a major Christian doctrine: The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Actually, most Muslims deny the Crucifixion—due to not reading the Quran carefully enough. Wherever I turned, I found something wrong; or else, I'd find a limited interpretation of one religion, expressed by the people in another one. You'd have thought I'd have become hysterical. I didn't, but only because my great professor had taught about the unity of religions, although only when seen from above. He had talked about this kind of problem, and here's a little story about it. This story seems to be making fun of Catholics. However, I'm very sorry everybody: This story exists in different forms, and it makes fun of all narrow-minded believers in all religions. The Catholics are not one whit worse than Muslims or others.

Well, once a Muslim went to heaven, and Saint Peter welcomed him like a long lost son, at the gate. Saint Peter showed him around, and the newcomer was glorifying God at every new sight. But he saw a wall up there! The Muslim asked, "*What* is *that?*" Saint Peter leaned over, and whispered in his ear:

"Shush! It's the Catholics over there, and they think they're the only ones up here!"

While I'm at it: Have you heard about the two Quaker ladies, who were washing dishes together, in their old age? One turned to the other, and said, "All the world is mad, but thee and me Priscilla; and sometimes I wonder about thee!"

Now let me explain better what kind of ignorance I was facing: Here are two allegories. Once several blind men were asked to describe an elephant after being allowed to touch it. One said it was a curved, hard thing; another described huge soft pillars; another said it was a thick and sort of furry piece of cloth. They were all sure of themselves, because they had learned from first-hand experience. Those blind men are like those who say they have the best and only religion, race or nation. They're likely right, from a valid point of view: They've been taught or have seen the wonderful sides of their own people, but they haven't seen the whole picture.

Another and better way to explain the same thing, shows *levels* of knowing. Imagine that you are on the top of a mountain. From there, you can see that there are paths going to and from the top, on all sides of the mountain. You may see snow and only a few plants on one side, but lush foliage on another side. Maybe you'll see that down below the snowline, there are fields of flowers. And maybe the kinds of animals are different on the snowy side. The point is that one can have a superior point of view (unless one is somewhat or totally blind)!

Those paths are the religions. When someone is on one path, he cannot see that there are others leading to the same God at the top. If one is on the shaded side, where there is the purity of snow and ice, one may deny that there is any other path. Now the most remarkable thing about this story is the top of the mountain. If one tries, seeks, knocks, prays, and learns more and more... one becomes aware of the fact that some people know so much more about God and everything spiritual that they are way up high, out of sight. We cannot imagine a trace of what they know. Unfortunately, the modern world has eliminated a certain sense in us: The sense for imagining that someone is better than we are. This is catastrophic for the spiritual life, for reaching truth at any level and for society. We have little sense of hierarchy: children don't respect their parents; and now some writers are dropping capital letters. Soon Jesus will have no capital letter on His Name, and be like one of us.

Aristotle and I

Before graduating, I had many trials. One was the dear philosopher, Aristotle. I say "dear" because I've heard some delightful stories about him; but to me, he was far from dear. Due to the influence of the "great" Dr. Nasr, I had

decided to write my thesis on the concept of the Perfect Man, in the *Mathnawi* of Jalal ud-Din Rumi. To the Head of my Department (The History of Knowledge) that meant that my thesis would be about metaphysics. And Aristotle is famous for a book on metaphysics (but with a totally different meaning), so guess what: I had to study Aristotle! If that doesn't faze you, take a look at this:

> "But with regard to incomposites, what is being or not being, and truth or falsity? A thing of this sort is not composite, so as to 'be' when it is compounded, and not to 'be' if it is separated, like 'that the wood is white' or 'that the diagonal is incommensurable'; nor will truth and falsity be still present in the same way as in the previous cases."

Wouldn't you too have preferred to get the flu? In fact, there are widely opposing ideas about what the word "metaphysics" means, and Aristotle and I were on different sides. My professor was with him.

I was in an impossible situation, and as usual, I took the "human" way out. It was glacially cold, so I opened a big window and stood in front of it, until I knew I'd be very sick. When my voice was about gone, I called that teacher (Oh dear: I just remembered that his name was "Murdock," which sounds like "murder on the dock"[17]) and told him I couldn't come to see him for our next big talk about Aristotelian metaphysics. Then I dragged myself to some Dean's office and changed my major from "The History of Knowledge" to plain "History."

Now many of you intellectuals will understand this: Aristotle "killed" a higher type of knowledge. Well, I had killed something too—a lot of time reading spiritual books (reading: well, I loved some of them so much that I feel like saying I "ate" them). Anyway, it had become clear that I didn't have enough grades to graduate, unless I took a tremendous number of classes in my final year. So I wrote a petition, saying that I was suddenly motivated to work. And I really was motivated, because Dr. Nasr had come back to lecture at Harvard, after moving to Iran; and he had scolded me for my poor grades. He said that I had to graduate, be able to earn a living and be independent, in order to become a disciple of his spiritual master, Frithjof Schuon. Becoming a disciple meant being initiated into the Sufi Tariqah[18] which had Frithjof Schuon as its Shaykh, or guide. I was quite surprised by the requirements my professor enumerated, partly because it sounded as if I had to act like a man; but far from me to question why. All I did was do or die.

A few days after I'd filed that petition, I was called into the office of a famous woman Dean, who wore half-glasses. She congratulated me on my

17 Murdock is actually a fine old Celtic name, meaning "sea warrior".

18 The word "Tariqah" means path; but it is a more narrow, more difficult path to follow than a "Sirat" which is followed by all Muslims. Sufism requires more of its adherents than does Islam—or rather, it requires perfection in following Islam.

well-written petition, and approved my taking six classes—the most anyone had taken, ever! Man! I really had to get to work; and was it ever tough! Having cut off all news from all media, did not help. After reading a folktale, told by Ramakrishna, about planting trees, I had decided to keep the world out of my life, by never listening to, reading or watching the news. That kept me from understanding many things; but still. I did wonderfully well—except, ay ay ay! In Ottoman history: I got a D+ for trying; but that course was all about Sultans, who kept... well, I've said enough about murder for now. When I saw that D+, my heart sank: That meant I couldn't make up enough of the "points" I needed to graduate! I was doomed, and due to saints!

About to cry, I straggled into the Dean's Office. There was the Dean with the half-glasses. I said, "I just got a D+ in Ottoman History, so I can't graduate with my class."

She said, "Wait a minute: I have to check the Board's decision on your petition." Soon, she was back: "The Board gave you permission to take six classes; but it did not say you had to pass them!"

Chapter 4
Adventures With People

"Il y a fagots et fagots!"[19]

Some Great Walls of China, were as yet unseen!

One apparent obstacle on my path was the dear, Irish Catholic Priest, named Father Sheehey. He kept me from becoming a Catholic, by saying that I believed in other religions; therefore I could not believe in "the universality of the Catholic Church" (Only Catholics go to heaven). That doctrine no longer exists; but it was God's will: I was soon to become a Muslim, in spite of the initial reservations of Dr. Nasr. My best friend, Yvonne, would be married by Father Sheehey: He seemed to be there for her, not me, as God willed another detour on my path.

Have you already imagined what took me decades to realize? There was an amazing person, but who kept me from going anywhere—and that for most of my life. Yes, he *was* great, as I had thought; but he would also both block my way, and lead me astray. He was the great Dr. Nasr himself!

This is the way life goes: I'm absolutely, eternally grateful, and several of his books are in the Bibliography, for excellent reasons. He is one of the most erudite men alive; I cannot say enough good about him. Many of his books remain the most lucid presentations of sacred knowledge. *However*, much later in my life, I realized that he did not have a perfect character; *and* he led me into a heresy that could have destroyed me; *and* he *still* defends that heresy (You'll

19 "There are bundles of wood and bundles of wood." This is a quote from Molière, one of the greatest of French writers. The meaning is that things, like people, can look alike on the outside. In reality, there's an immense difference between one and the other.

see what it was further on); *and* he became guilty of some improper behavior with women (but only in his later years); *and* he also subtly inserted some odd Shiite ideas into essential, esoteric doctrines. I tell everyone: Do *not* follow him as a spiritual master: He is decidedly not a True Shaykh. *However*, he *is* a great man, rich in wisdom—a treasure, who should not be looked down upon! When someone is that fine in *knowledge*, he can still be criticized, *but only by someone better than him*. Eventually, I would see his *character* faults perfectly well; but I'd never have dared talk about his *knowledge* without help from scholars who were greater than he was!

There is a great mystery in here, which runs throughout my life, and likely yours: This is a strange time in the history of the world. Impossibilities seem to exist. What happened to me was that I met people who had so much *wisdom*—not only book knowledge—and so much spiritual acumen that one could think they were saints and legitimate guides for others. It took a lifetime; but I realized that such people must behave and think according to revelation. And it is *not* enough for them to teach that: They themselves must do it.

Why should I tell you already, what I was far from seeing myself? I want you to "grow up" much faster than I did: That's one reason. But also, the plot thickens; and you need to imagine the forest when you see a lot of trees.

The man at the top of the stairs

A great "green light" man I'll never forget, was first seen by me at the top of what seemed to be a very high flight of stairs, in Greenwich Village, New York. You see, when Father Sheehey refused to baptize me as a Catholic, naturally, I wrote to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, my Great professor in Iran, and goodness knows how I addressed him in those days. I thought he was someone of monumental importance in the history of the world, so I must have said, "Oh most honored spiritual presence" or some such; and then my letter must have said something like this:

> "Father Sheehey has refused to baptise me as a Catholic—explaining his reasons categorically. He says I do not believe in 'The Universality of the Catholic Church,' so here I am again, wanting to enter Islam. I never wanted to be a Christian anyway; I was only obeying you, due to the most extreme respect. You said I'd never get married if I were a Muslim woman in America, that I couldn't eat meat or keep my money in a bank, and all in all that life would be extremely difficult as a Muslim woman, alone in the United States. None of that bothers me in the least, so I am returning to ask if I may become a Muslim now? I cannot go to a different priest and lie or be silent about my believing in several

> religions, so what do you advise? I will not move right or left without your blessing."

That is about what I must have said. At that time, I was pure obedience, almost a worshipper of his. *Never* would I *ever* have made a decision on my own.

Ages later, I actually got a reply! You cannot imagine it: For me that was like a letter from God, and actually, in a way, it was from Him, because, as Saint Paul describes in the Book of Romans: For those who love God, all things work together unto good. I was being led to Him through all the people who are like roads and detours, even the deadends of life. They don't look like it; but they can cost you decades in lost time and grief. It is not their fault though: God tests us with such "walls" and if you want to know the whole Truth, then man! I tell you: He can *really test* somebody! And He says in the Quran, "Not all roads go straight." I used to wonder why that was interesting enough to be a revealed verse; but I sure have learned why!

Dr. Nasr answered my letter by writing something like this:

> "I have had the occasion to show your letter to Frithjof Schuon, who praised your intention, and so I suggest you go to Greenwich Village, in New York, on such a date. Frithjof Schuon, who is secretly a Muslim and '*an unsurpassable spiritual master,*' will be passing through New York, after visiting the American Indians. He is Shaykh Isa Nur ud-Din Ahmad, who lives in Switzerland, and he is my own spiritual guide."

Those words—"an unsurpassable spiritual master"—would stay with me for decades, and make me absolutely devoted to the man I would come to call "the Shaykh". Before receiving that letter, I knew only that my sublime professor assigned books by Frithjof Schuon as required reading in his classes. He praised him to the sky too, but I had the hardest time reading those books; and I vaguely knew that a Shaykh was the spiritual guide for a Tariqah. All in all, I was throwing myself headlong, into an unknown domain, trusting in God, but not anywhere near as consciously as I do now. Now pay attention: God sees and hears everything. *He* knew who I believed in and why: The greatest man I'd ever met, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, had called Frithjof Schuon "unsurpassable" as a spiritual guide in that letter. I believed in and trusted Dr. Nasr as if he were God Himself. That's idolatry; but God is Mercy. Just you wait!

In seventh heaven, I told my mother about that invitation to meet Frithjof Schuon. To my astonishment, she would not let me, her 19-year-old daughter, go to New York alone. Of course she was right; but I was trapped, with no choice. Off I went with her by my side, in a train. The next thing I remember, we were in an apartment building, looking up an endless stairway. I'd say we saw up three floors. A door opened way up on top. There was a very tall man at the top of the stairs. He said, "Have you come to see Monsieur Schuon?" But I knew that he himself, *was* Frithjof Schuon.

He had the eyes of an eagle, a very high forehead, and his very presence practically knocked me over. But wonders never cease: That amazing-looking man at the top of the stairs was only a disciple! And that evening, he faded into oblivion—literally! Once I stepped inside the apartment, I could hardly recognize his imposing figure in the darkened room. Seven years later, he would save my life!

The "man at the top of the stairs" was one of several people who rescued me, in some way, or in many ways. That tall, eagle-eyed man would practically save me spiritually, psychically and practically. Write my name down among the grateful, and see this verse in the Quran: "If anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole of humanity." (Quran, 5:32)

The Shaykh in the dark

Once inside, I found a very dimly lit room, in which the Shaykh was seated far away; and it seemed to me that he was wrapped up in sheets, so I had no idea what he looked like. It was obvious that he was the Shaykh, because everyone was turned towards him, as if towards a center; and the eagle-eyed man from the top of the stairs was sitting unobtrusively and almost invisibly too, by the Shaykh's side, to translate.

Although the great personage was practically invisible, I did recognize three or four people from the university in that room: I had seen those faces walking through Harvard Yard. When I saw the Shaykh's young wife, she seemed just like Ma Anandamoyi to me. Yusuf had told me about her, but not how beautiful, simple, natural and dignified she was. I found her to be, quite obviously, a great and "realized" saint. Actually, she was indeed a treasure: She was just human too. I hadn't yet realized that most of us are like that!

Each person was asked why he had come; but maybe because I had had to bring my mother with me, they all saw her and realized they should wait to talk until we left. Anyway, they all just said they had come for the *barakah* (blessing or grace) of the master. However, when my turn came, I spoke up saying, in English, which was translated for the Shaykh, that I wanted to become a Muslim and be his disciple; but my family objected. (And that meant my mother, who had become like a hissing snake, due to racial and religious prejudices galore! I was only 19 too, which meant that I was even legally under her authority, helpless).

The Shaykh answered in French, and the tall man with the eagle eyes translated carefully into English for me (and my mother): "Well then, let her keep it a secret." The Shaykh didn't realize that my "family" was sitting right beside me! Needless to say, my dear mother had an awful impression: The Shaykh was invisible in the dark, and he had told me to play a trick on her. Actually, I *had* to, and that's allowed in such conundrums. I don't blame him for that, but the

general impression in that room was not frank, forthright. Dim lighting is a normal atmosphere for contemplation, but not for introductions.

That marvelous wife of his then told us: "You may leave now." And I practically wept, because being there was the dream of my life; but also, I'd seen dishes to wash in the kitchen. I wanted to serve them all, and I'd dreamt of bringing precious offerings: lotuses or pomegranates… some symbols of wisdom or adoration, something ineffable, like frankincense or myrrh.

On our way downstairs, my mother said: "Why would such a fine young woman (as Sayyidah Latifah) marry a man like him?" Sure, I knew why: Any woman would die to marry a great saint like him! After her dismal remark, which I ignored—like I'd basically ignore all my mother's spiritual attitudes from then on—she kept pretty quiet. She knew I was impossible; and I knew she was too! Whereas I'd written my mother off as beneath any and everything, my impression of that meeting in the darkened room, was marvelous—not that much of anything worthwhile had been said; but the saintly, calm and dignified Sayyidah Latifah was quite enough proof for me.

Two strangers on a train

By the grace of God, my mother fell asleep on the train back from seeing the Shaykh in that dark room. Up ahead, where there was a sort of lounge area in the train, I recognized two men who had been in the dark room at a little distance from me! I wiggled past my dozing mother, and introduced myself. They were both so spiritual, intelligent, full of personality and humour! One was quite American, talkative and brimming over with humor, but incredibly well-educated, whereas the other was sober, intellectual, and of noble German ancestry. Little did I know that they had long been best friends—albeit they were so strikingly different at first glance. I was overwhelmed to meet such passionately interesting people—never had I met the likes of them. Incidentally, they were also both quite handsome; and much later I'd find out that they both had a liking for beautiful young girls. It seems I was one, but didn't know it.

At that time, while I was dying of delight to see those two entrancing men on the train, I still had a year left at Harvard before graduation. Not having taken anything seriously except God and everything spiritual, I'd failed many courses and would barely get out of there alive. I'd skipped practically all my classes so I could read scriptures and the lives of Prophets and saints. Well, those books included the lives of many Catholic saints, and among those were many who bore the Stigmata and who had experienced the Crucifixion every Friday. In other words, there was *no* way I could believe that Jesus was not Crucified.

Now if you are a Muslim, and you think those saints were dreamers or psychics, then please read many biographies of Catholic saints, and you'll

understand me. If you know enough about Islam, you'll never be tempted by anything; however, you can love all kinds of holiness if that's in your nature. A hadith says: "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer. Wherever he finds it, he has the right to it."

I have found wisdom everywhere, my whole life: In other religions, in situations, in animals and in nature. I love roaming free, and I had a dream of being even in the lowest Paradise; but I wanted Pegasus, the mythological white stallion with wings. He would take me to visit all the Prophets and saints of every religion. We would see the whole world too, with every nation and race. I liked the name of an old song: *Don't Fence Me In!*

Well, I was going to become a Muslim any day because the noble German, he alone, soon called me at home, in the apartment where I lived with my mother. He told me that he would hear my testimony of faith, so I'd be a Muslim. But suddenly, I discovered that the Quran denies the Crucifixion! In distress, I called Yusuf, who was supposedly still guiding me.

"Was Jesus crucified?" I asked.

"No, He was not crucified," he replied.

I said, "That's impossible, I know He was crucified; countless people were present, and I've read the lives of too many saints, who bore the stigmata."

Yusuf repeated his statement, coldly with no pity. (Actually, he wasn't nearly as knowing as Seyyed Hossein Nasr; but I had no idea. He also had no sympathy for me whatsoever; but I only realized that years later. It wasn't his fault: I was a hard to handle mystery, full of confusions).

Finally I hung up, and wept my heart out. Islam was certainly a true religion. The Quran is certainly the word of God; Jesus was certainly crucified, and the Quran denies that. What could I do? I bathed in my tears for a while and then decided to store the problem in the back of my mind for later. It stayed right there for sixty years!

Actually, the Quran does not deny the Crucifixion: It denies that the people who were there took the life of Jesus. *God* took Him[20] up, and *He* will bring Jesus, who is now alive, back to rule the world for a time of peace. Many, if not most, Muslims misinterpret that verse—causing much trouble and heartache. Christians do something similar, and if this goes on, there will be no one left on earth but people who deny the existence of God!

Well, when the day came for me to become a Muslim, one of those two men, that American, but of noble German ancestry, received me into Islam—he alone—in a little, locked room. That room was in the immense Widener Library, the largest university library in the world. Up some mysterious stairs, there was a locked room, full of huge and rare volumes of Arabic dictionaries

20 I write He and Him, in referring to Jesus Christ: Muslims, this is *"aadaab"*. I may be wrong about that; but my intention is to have great respect for those who are literally our brothers and sisters. Isaac was the father of the Jews and Christians, whereas Ishmael is the father of Muslims.

and grammar books. Only advanced Arabic students and some librarians had a key, and he was the Director of Harvard's School of Education Library, so he had a key.

The event itself was very simple: I said the Shahadah[21] with him listening, and then I noticed an Arabic inscription on the wall. It said: "Noble speech." You'll see at the end: My life began and ended with the Shahadah. Or put it differently: Say that I spent a lifetime looking for the Truth. The Truth was in the Shahadah, which I said at age 20; but I only realized what I had, at age 80! That's now everybody! I did not know what Islam really was for most of my life, and that's a very common problem among Occidentals, who adopt relatively unknown religions. On top of that, I had no idea where the most profound truth was. I'd never have thought it was in the Shahadah!

Back home with my mother!

When I had announced that I'd decided to enter Islam, I of course expected trouble, and I sure got it; but to my utter amazement, she became like a hissing snake, shouting, and saying something to the effect that the apple of her eye must not be associated with people of other colors or of various walks of life! I'd expected ideological trouble, but no; and she hadn't the faintest idea what colors Christians come in, or where they came from. There are Christians of every color under the sun.

Anyway, the instant I said the Shahadah, I was a Muslim in secret, while living with her. Now that got complicated, and all the more so because I was headed for a Sufi Tariqah, and had invocations to say on a rosary. One day, I went into the closet, shut the door behind me, and said my rosary quietly in there. Not seeing me anywhere, and thinking I'd forgotten to make my bed, she kindly made it for me, and then straightened up my room. Then, when she was in the kitchen, I suddenly came out of that closet, and she saw me re-appear—albeit, I had not come in by the outside door! She had some look on her face! But I couldn't offer any explanation.

Twasn't easy to say five prayers[22] and fast during Ramadan in secret; but fortunately, I didn't know the Shariah yet, so I prayed in the bathroom, with the shower running, and ducking my head under the wash basin for *sujud* (prostration). Then, during Ramadan, I'd leave before dawn and return at the time to break the fast. Three years later, when I told her I'd already been a

21 The Shahadah is the testimony of faith in Islam, and it consists of sincerely believing in, and saying, in Arabic, "I testify that there is none worthy of worship except God; and I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God".

22 In Islam, everyone must perform a ritual prayer five times a day. One stands, bows and prostrates with one's forehead, hands, knees and feet on the floor or ground. Each position represents an attitude towards God; and a full explanation, beyond the scope of this book, is profound. The most important moment is the prostration, called sujud, in which one says, "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High".

Muslim for three years, she was as good as gold! But she still tried off and on to control my life (while having irresistible qualities too: Us humans are not all black or white).

The first Ramadan, when I was living with her as a Muslim in secret, I got up and left our apartment before dawn, and went to an all-night café. Then when it was time to break the fast, I turned up at home again. She was livid, because I'd worried her. I guess she'd heard me leave in the dark. She said, "If you ever do that again, I'm going off into some little village and die, by myself!" I thought that over carefully, and did the exact same thing the next morning. When I got home at the time to break my fast, she had a marvelous supper on the table, with all the things I like most. After a while, she said, "Would you like a little more butter?" She never tried to dominate me again.

After I'd kept my Islam a secret for three years, I told her I'd been a Muslim for three years: She was like a lamb! She remained more or less like that, for the rest of her life, and made charming little secret jokes with me when we had company. My need to get away from her would never end; but she was much more restrained. In Islam, one must honor and obey those in charge, including parents; but only in good!

In the beginning years, my practice of Islam was far from orthodox; but those two men I'd met on the train didn't care at all. The Tariqah toward which I was headed cared little about the Islamic sacred law and customs, and that suited me fine. Us "foreigners" in unknown religions, take to freedom from rules like ducks take to water, and us Americans are the worst.

Dr. Nasr, however, a born Muslim, said emphatically that *there can be no Tariqah without Shariah*. In other words: no esoterism[23] without exotericism. There can be no secret, elevated, spiritual path, unless it be grounded in revelation, and in its sacred, revealed law. This same truth exists in all religions; but many Christians today think they can do anything if they believe they will be saved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, He did not say that. He said, "If you love Me, follow my commandments."

For the next seven years, I would see those men I met on the train, off and on. They both said they were *gyaanis* (*jnanis*) and I was a *bhakti*—that is, they had a way of knowledge, whereas I had a way of love. Now that meant they were my superiors, because knowledge includes love; but love can be blind. Indeed, they were by far my superiors in spiritual intelligence and knowledge, so I lived in rapt admiration. Honestly, I still need others to lead me through trials in knowledge, so, far be it from me to underestimate the intelligence of others. Your informant here, fervently loves the highest Divine Knowledge; but she was not created as a Knower—as were some.

23 Esoterism is the highest realm of spiritual knowledge, part of which is secret, because understanding it requires moral and spiritual qualifications.

Planting trees

I read something before I met those two men, and it has always affected my life. Neither those two, nor anyone I've ever met, has addressed this subject concretely; but one thing I really want to talk about is my learning, at Harvard University mind you, "to plant trees." This is a subject for people who are absolutely in love with God and it requires a leap in faith, like running away from home with a diamond pin.

I'm always trying to include you when I talk, but you're all so different: Take what suits you. Well, somehow I got a hold of a book, called *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by 'M'. I've no idea how orthodox a Hindu Ramakrishhna was, but I loved parts of that book so much that I'd have eaten the paper it was written on. One story in particular changed my life. Decades later I found its truth in Islam, and in all real religions too. When I read that, I was fire and flame, wanting to give myself entirely to God—as I always am, through failings, sins, weaknesses—anything and everything.

Well, Ramakrishna, who lived in India, was telling his disciples that they absolutely had to stay out of the world. So he used an analogy, saying: When you plant a young tree, you have to build a fence around it. Otherwise, an elephant may walk on it, or children will step on it while they're playing. Later, when it's tall and strong, giraffes can eat from its leaves, and elephants can rub up against it. Nothing will harm it at all.

I took that to heart, and thought I should shut the world out of my life; but I had no one to talk to—no real advice. I think Seyyed Hossein Nasr was still at Harvard when I decided that, but he was quite formal, aloof—even a trifle inhuman maybe, because I was a beautiful young girl then, and he was an as yet unmarried professor. Only later did he return with a wife, so I was on my own for making concrete decisions. Now I do not recommend this to anyone else, but for practically the rest of my life, I never looked at TV, heard a radio, or read a newspaper: As far as this world went, I knew nothing!

That has kept me innocent in a way, but has it ever caused problems too! Do not do this: It's something that saved me; but this kind of exclusion can make it impossible to earn a living or get along with others. It even makes one seem crazy these days. I'm serious! There are other ways to achieve the same end, but don't ask me about them: They're all as hard to live by as what I did; however, there's absolutely *no way* to be truly intelligent without leaving the "world" out. Actually, people who do not do that are literally blind; but they don't know it, and it can be impossible to talk to them. Few of you have renounced the world, but being good-hearted and ignorant makes it possible to read, hear, and learn—to take things "to heart"—even if one is blind to some extent.

Only recently, did I read a saying of Muhammad's: One may go to paradise, even for saying the Shahadah only once, with sincerity (as Abu Talib

could have done) but only *provided one doesn't "mix it up."* Ali asked: "Mix it up?" And it was explained that one could not mix the spiritual with what is worldly. That can mean many things, and does not necessarily exclude being wealthy and owning property or having savings. The point is not to be preoccupied with material things, including one's physical body. Now I can tell you all, from the depth of my heart (which doesn't know a lot of things, but it sure does know this one): There are things, people, situations and ideas that you can understand only if you have found some way to keep the world out of your life. You must find some good way to "plant trees"—to protect your soul from the "world" or you cannot have a real spiritual life, and you can never know certain things. This cannot be overstated, and neither can the truth in any hadith, or any line in the Quran, be belittled. The same thing is true in other faiths.

Now I've been quite emphatic in saying that everyone is blind, who doesn't give up the world. I really mean that. Still, the fact needs to be situated in levels. A worldly person is blind regarding insights into souls. When someone talks or does something, only an unworldly person can *see* his inner state, his character, his degree of faith or lack thereof. People do and say things—having no idea that they are transparent to someone who has pretty much given up the world.

However, this kind of "seeing" or "not being blind" is almost nothing compared to the "seeing" of spiritual realization. I can "see" into people's souls to a certain extent; but I'm still blind, and dying to see the way "real people" do. Astonishingly, as you'll see, there are people who sure seem to have spiritual realization (or else they're geniuses) but their characters are primitive and they are worldly. Such folks are fakes! As Jesus said, "One cannot worship God and Mammon!" Mammon is a personal name for the negative aspects of the world.

Now this is decidedly not a cut 'n dried subject! In this story you will see me go astray, sin, lose my temper and even become a bit out of my mind. Being other-worldly does not mean being all good, but this gets complicated—like life!

Well, the first problem I met after deciding to shut myself off from the world, by avoiding all "news" was: How to graduate from Harvard? There are exams, which require what society calls being "well-rounded." I was decidedly not that, and I did not want to become it, so into my exams I went, trusting in God.

Remember: I'd seen the Shaykh in the dark and then met the two strangers on the train, but I still had to graduate, and the worst thing happened: I had to pass an exam in Middle Eastern politics. Naturally, I hadn't done half the reading, and there I was: The professor passed out the final exam. It was just two short quotations that we had to compare. That was all. I had no idea who the people being quoted were, or what either quote had to do with the politics of the Middle East! So I did the only thing I could: I just analyzed the characters

of each, and concluded by comparing the virtues and faults of the two men. Loving people from age nine made me pretty sharp: I saw; but that was highly unlikely to get me anything but a D+ for trying!

Weeks later, we got our papers back. I could have failed that exam, but about fainted! Mine said: "A+ Very interesting! What would you say if such and such?" I had no idea what I'd say, and just hoped I'd never see that professor again, so he couldn't ask me! I dreaded running into him by accident, walking through Harvard Yard. It turned out that everyone else knew it: We were comparing two famous figures: Hasan al-Banna and Gamal Abd un-Nasr of Egypt.

I finally graduated by the skin of my teeth. During the whole four years, I only had one real friend, my opposite: A brilliant girl from Latvia, named Ilona. She graduated Summa Cum Laude, which proves I'm not being subjective. By receiving that honor, she was shown to be one of the most intelligent women in the world. And I, alas, graduated last! But that Dean with the half-glasses came over and gave me a hug: "Well Maudie, I see you made it!" I wouldn't trade that for the world. She was so smart, that she only wore half-glasses: I guess she didn't need help when she looked up, so she didn't pay to have glass on the top, or something—anyway, she sure did give the impression of being a genius. Actually, from the day I got off a plane, at age 17 until now at 80, I've been surrounded by all kinds of geniuses, or by people who were fascinating.

After the ceremonies, Ilona and I went off to talk and say goodbye, in a little park nearby. She was amused to see that I actually wanted to *apply* what we had been learning from Dr. Nasr. For her, practising was a contamination of pure intellectuality! I never saw or heard from Ilona again, although I wrote to her.

Soon after graduation however, there I was with my best friend from the past: Yvonne! She finally got into Harvard Graduate School! She had proven herself worthy, and would get her doctorate in Physics. We were best friends as ever—and dear Father Sheehy, who had refused to baptize me, later performed the marriage for Yvonne, my heart's friend—the one I thought I'd never see again. From childhood, I had very close friendships, writing poems to my girlfriends—some silly, some serious; but I quite loved my friends, and idealized each one.

As for Andy, he married our friend Françoise. We had been three young ladies, all in love with the same young man. We had much in common back then; but our lives' paths were to lead us away from one another, and into the lives of other people. It's funny: Andy and Yvonne were both physicists, and Françoise, sort of married physics. Isn't physics the summit, or the essence, of the knowledge of matter and energy? I was to hop out of that whole universe. "Matter" was not for me: "Spirit" was what I wanted. I can't quite explain it,

but the spiritual domain is real. The material domain is a relative illusion; but wait: Maybe I can explain that someday.

A strange way to earn a living

When my mother came to live with me, she was still quite able to earn a living and found a good job in an architect's office right away; but one day when I was skipping my classes, I went home early. She was home early too! By her face, I guessed that she was ashamed; and I thought she had been fired because she was so domineering once she got used to people. I never asked her though, and she never went to work again. In the strangest way, we received an inheritance from an uncle neither of us knew; and that got us through my final year at Harvard. Then, right after graduating, I had my mother to support, plus the usual details: A cat and kittens. Having been busy learning about God, I hadn't even learned to type, so there was no way I could get any ordinary kind of job.

Way down under the ground floor of Widener Library, my eyes fell upon an old-fashioned-looking Arabic typewriter. Since I had taken lots of Arabic classes, I thought, "Why not learn to type in Arabic?" So I wrote down the order of the keys and memorized it. Then I spent the last of a little inheritance to study some more Arabic at the University of Michigan's Summer School, where I'd found out that there was an Arabic typewriter I could practise on. Then, from Michigan, I wrote to Harvard Widener Library's Middle Eastern Division. I said, "I know Arabic, I can type in it, and I want to become a librarian. Would you have a job for me?" Not one word was true, and I don't lie; but my German "guide" put me up to it.

Surprise! When I got back from Michigan, I had an interview, and faced two Arab librarians. One put a book in front of me, and said, "Read it!" Well, guess: I could hardly read a word! Still, they gave me a test: I was to go down under the earth to that old typewriter and type about ten words on a card. That took me an hour, and I wasted dozens of library cards; but no one was watching. I got those words perfectly centered and took my little card back upstairs. They actually hired me! I didn't know it, but they had no choice: The Arabic typist had just left to return to her native Lebanon!

Soon, I was typing away a mile a minute. It's no harder than typing in English. Then, my boss tried to see how far I could go: He got me typing Persian, Urdu and Ottoman Turkish on that machine. Then he managed to get me doing all kinds of other things; and soon Harvard offered to pay my way and give me time off to get my Master's Degree in Library Science. I do not like books, only people; and I'd not really wanted to become a professional librarian, but soon I was one!

Then, one day I found my real calling in a tiny task I'll never forget. My boss was getting many complaints from a bookseller in Syria. He had sold us too many books, but hadn't been paid, and he was furious. My boss, Labib, gave me a try at peace-making, and I quite loved it! I described our enormous library, told the bookseller how famous it was, and how many departments a request for payment passed through. Then I signed with one of my favorite lines in the Quran, and you'll see that this line will return. It is: فصبر جميل والله المستعان "Patience is beautiful, and God is the One whose help is to be sought."

The man had no idea who he was selling to, how reliable Widener is, or that an American Secretary could type a few words in Arabic. Well, from then on, I told people I wanted to be a trouble-shooter or peacemaker for a job, and I actually did that in some way, for the rest of my working life. I adore solving problems among *people* and making peace. I love people! Alas though: "When there is peace between cat and the mouse, the shop falls in ruin!" Tisn't always a great idea to make peace: Sometimes, you have to draw the line and say, "You're right, and he's dead wrong!"

PROOF

Chapter 5
Alone With God...

"We live, in fact, in a world starved for solitude, silence, and privacy: and therefore starved for meditation and true friendship."

C.S. Lewis, 'Weight of Glory'

Thou art my protecting friend

Not being able to see the Shaykh until I could travel to Switzerland, I was uninitiated, and not allowed to invoke the Divine Name, "Allah," as did my two, new gentlemen-friends. However, I was given some instructions on invoking the Shahadah: "*Laa ilaaha illa Llaah*" لآ اله إلا الله (There is no god but God). That became my constant companion, and I was perfectly at home with it. Having to work though, it didn't penetrate my whole life, until a time when I got assigned to a routine task. All I had to do, for months on end, was to file thousands of library cards in Arabic, in alphabetical order. So I said the Shahadah, silently, with concentration, before filing each card. In a few days or weeks, the Shahadah filled me with peace, and I got so I could hardly live without it. I'd wake up saying it and take my rosary to bed at night—saying it until I fell asleep.[24] My chest felt as if the remembrance of God was radiating

24 Saying the Shahadah that way in Islam, is quite similar to saying the Jesus Prayer in Christianity: At least the method and the results are strikingly similar... and the depth is infinite. Simple people can say those invocations and be at peace, while increasing in faith; and others can reach Divine Knowledge, but only with correct guidance. Muslims will go astray, whatever they do if they leave out Muhammad—so one must say محمد رسول الله "I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God" after each 1000, or occasionally if

in it, and it brought both warmth and great peace. This is an amazingly real physical and spiritual phenomenon. One's health is marvelously well-touched too. Spiritually, one is happy to be alone with God. I still remember and have ever kept on telling God about it in my prayers: For the last 60 years, I've always been able to be happy when alone with Him. In Arabic, I say: حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل (God is sufficient for me, and He is the best of protectors), and انت ولي في الدنيا والاخرة. (Thou art my Protecting Friend in this world and in the Next). I'm never lonely... except, well, you'll see.

One day, after that grace began to change me, the German faqir looked into my office, signaling that I should step out for a moment, so I did. He said I looked like a woman all of a sudden, and no more like a nervous young girl pulling on her fingers. I had no idea how I had been; but I did feel quite different, and so much "at home" with the constant invocation of the Shahadah. The grace I experienced was almost word for word like what the Russian pilgrim described in, the little book Dr. Nasr had given me, *The Way of a Pilgrim*. *Ahadith,* meaning sayings of Muhammad, declare that the Shahadah is the best *dhikr* (invocation); saying it is the best act, the easiest act, the most rewarded and the highest praise of God—even when said on soft beds! For an easy to read book on it, I highly recommend a part of a little book, called *Fazail-e-amaal*. That is not a scholarly work; but it has most of the quotations from the Quran and ahadith on several, highly praised kinds of dhikr, and on the superiority of dhikr itself. I do not know how good the commentary is; but the quotations may well give one enough inspiration to get through many a trial in life.

Slow as molasses in August, I was realizing that my fellow American, not the German-American, who I'd met on the train, was extremely worldly, and an incurable alcoholic. I saw that perfectly well; but I thought he was a present-day variant of Omar Khayyam: Profound, but veiled under an illusion of drunkenness. As for the German, he was an inveterate liar, most often for no reason at all; he just had no sense of truth. The Shaykh had *not* put him in charge of me either, which is what he had claimed! However, sometimes he'd say something that seemed so apropos, that I'd be certain he was God's agent. I *saw* what was wrong with both of them; but I couldn't *believe* it. They were too intelligent and spiritual not to be good. That's what I thought then; I refused to admit the truth about them, so I stored my impressions in the back of my head.

Near the end, the German told me he'd be away, serving as a spy for the US in Guatemala. For the first time, I didn't believe him, so I started walking to a phone booth to call his office, to see what his secretaries would say. Halfway

invoking informally, while doing things. Christians will obviously go astray without Jesus, but His name is in the Jesus Prayer. The doctrine in the Shahadah is the absolute opposite of the doctrine in the long version of the Jesus Prayer. This leads into endless territory, far beyond the scope of this book.

there, I stopped myself: "No! He is my spiritual guide. I must have faith in him!" I was finally rewarded for my intention, which was really to worship God; at age 80; but I kept erring in half-worshipping humans in the meantime. If you Muslims are better educated in Islam than I was, you can avoid some or all of the pains I suffered from. Almost until old age, I had no idea what Islam really was, and that happens frequently to Occidental converts, who are easily led astray.

Also, I gradually realized that my German "upaguru" knew several women, who he advised me to stay away from; *and,* saying we would have a temporary (*mut'a*) marriage, he took me as his secret, second wife "too". I mean that in the end, I realized he "rather liked" a number of women in addition to me and his wife. For some six months, after giving me a little handwritten Quran as a dowry present, he would come to make love to me; however, I revered him so much that I was not the kind of "woman" he had in mind.

He also had a hero in the movie spy, James Bond; but I was too naïve then to add all this up and get less than a zero. You know what: He was brilliant, adventurous and full of personality; but he was someone who liked to "fly"—have a good time even in the spiritual life. I often hope he changed and will be forgiven, if only because he was extremely kind once. Well, I thought he was kind: He paid me an enormous compliment. Usually, he was insolently aloof, towards me and everyone—saying things like, "You have to listen to me; I don't have to listen to you." But once, he said, "You have intelligence, love and warmth." I had no idea he saw any good in me at all! He said that so kindly after he had practically murdered me with lies for years, so I was ready to forgive everything.

Adventures with Zionists

After three years of typing in Arabic script, I got bored with my job, and went to graduate school, far away. Those two men I'd met on the train were quite troubling me with their obvious and grave character defects; but I was still full of hope and faith—both in God and in them. Before I left, the German faqir gave me some advice: "You tend to be nervous, and so complicated! When you get there, learn from cats. They look about, and then relax—not thinking (like you do) 'What will I do if a piece of string comes down?'"

Thinking he was so near to God, I really took that to heart, so as soon as my mother and I had an apartment, I rushed off to "the pound," where one could adopt abandoned pets. Home I went, with an adorable, long-haired kitten, who seemed Persian-looking. That was significant, because I'd be studying Persian, and had a Research Assistantship, which boiled down to typing in Persian script; but my education and living expenses were paid.

Once home, I set that kitten down and promised it the best of everything; however, I expected to be taught to trust in God. I wanted to name it "trust" in Persian; but I couldn't quite find the word, so he became Riza, which means "contentment."

After looking around and starting classes (in Semitic Languages), I was not so happy. I was a Muslim in secret; but one Jewish professor there, knew me from Harvard: He had moved from teaching at Harvard, to teaching at UCLA the same year I did. I hadn't kept my Islam a secret back there; but now, somehow, I'd gotten into a department, where all the teachers were Zionists! They were decidedly unfriendly; but I had not the slightest idea what Zionism was, and I didn't want to inform myself, either. I wanted to be *out* of the world, *and* politics. I'd built a fence around my young tree and did not even read a word to inform myself as to what this was. Another student told me quite enough though.

When I finally realized that they were suspicious of me, I applied to transfer to a sister university, whose head of department I'd studied with before. Frankly, I described the problem; but my application was denied. Later, I found out that the man I wrote to was *also* a Zionist, and Jews made up the majority of the professors! Actually, those who know Hebrew make excellent scholars of Arabic and other Semitic languages. I'm in good part Jewish and haven't the slightest prejudice. I just didn't want the world to know I was a Muslim—partly because my mother and I had a nice Jewish student renting a room with us.

One day in an Arabic class, we came to a rather technical, legal term, meaning that one may conceal one's Islam when in danger. The professor pointed at me: "*You!* You must know what this means!" Thankfully, I had no idea; but I sure was upset later, when I looked it up! The Research Assistantship was also impossible: it took so much time that I saw I'd not be able to get good grades for long and my boss was another Zionist and a grumpy, sour-looking old maid.

Before the long Christmas/New Year's break, I applied for a grant to replace that Assistantship. The answer came in the first letter I had never seen before, from a computer! How insulting! And it said nothing but "Application denied." I died.

"In God we trust"

On New Year's Eve, I was pacing up and down, wringing my hands, and worrying: There was no exit. I didn't have any way to support myself and my mother. She had worked and supported me, until the moment I graduated and got my first job; but from then on, she was my dependent. I didn't even know how to type, except in Arabic script; I couldn't use a cash register—nothing!

Then suddenly I remembered my (unfortunately false) "guru's" advice, so I fervently promised God to trust in Him and just do what I could, but not to worry a second more! That was an absolutely sincere prayer.

In the morning, I went into the living room and greeted my mother as usual. She said: "You'll never guess what Riza did: he came to the double glass doors to be let in," (he liked to stay out all night) "and he had this dollar bill, neatly folded in his mouth." Then she showed me a dollar bill on the table. Since she was an atheist, I didn't tell her about my prayer; but I knew for sure that Allah Ta'ala had heard me and sent a sign. As for the dollar, I just spent it: I'm not one for keeping souvenirs. Ten years later, I realized that all American money has "In God we trust" on it!

Actually, when I saw that money, my first thought was that my German "guide" had sent it, and that he had heard me praying too—just as had God. My faith in that human being was a preview, a warning and a lesson (and ridiculous, seen from later)! However, he had said one kind thing to me.

We all know that sometimes our Lord is so pleased with one thing someone does, that all else is forgiven. May that be so for many; I just don't want it at the expense of the truth. I mean that we must distinguish between good and bad, and between true and false; but our Lord forgives whom He wills. I forgive everyone and am ready to be friends again too.

After the vacation, I went calmly back to my little graduate student's cubicle; but there was no solution in sight. There on my desk, was another letter from a computer! It read: "Your application for such and such, was transferred to such another such, and marked 'Priority A-1.' Go to Room 309 to receive your tuition and living allowance!"

At the end of the year, I went back home, to my former place at Harvard; however, by then every Zionist was being nice to me. I guess they'd realized I wasn't involved in politics. And guess who I had to see first at Harvard: The Dean with the half-glasses!

Out of the frying pan, into the fire!

I had left the Zionists at the University of California, to return to study at Harvard again. On the academic plane, I'd meet the great Dean with the half-glasses, who was a lady genius; but humanly, I was back with the German and the American.

I refused to believe the truth about either of them, for seven years in all. Then I collapsed, and wept for hours every day, uncontrollably. Just barely did I manage to keep on earning a livelihood for my mother and myself. Finally, the two of them had gotten me right on the brink of a nervous breakdown.

Maybe it is hard for spiritual masters to see the characters of those who come to them in search of guidance for the spiritual life.Those two men had

been eminently qualified, intellectually, for a high path of knowledge, since they were metaphysicians—meaning that they had a type of knowledge that comes from the spirit. That's called gnosis or intellection; and when extreme, one says that "the eye of the heart" is open. It really is an *exceedingly* impressive thing; it can be a great blessing, and is not at all to be pooh-poohed. But needless to say, I was a very naïve young lady, and a sitting duck for spiritual intruders. It took me decades to realize a crucial fact: A metaphysician is not necessarily good or bad! Allah and His Messenger love those with good character most; but wait: You'll see what I mean.

In a desperate state, I didn't know where to turn—having been left there with those two men, and having no way to contact the Shaykh's precious wife, who was the spiritual mistress for women. You may ask why I didn't write to Dr. Nasr in Iran? Well, my wounds were so deep by then, and caused by such personal matters that it would take more than letters to help me. Also, he was decidedly not the type for personal problems: He saw scholars and intelligence, not the weird phenomenon I was facing. But I did remember the name of "the man at the top of the stairs" in New York. And I managed to find him again, even after seven years, by driving to New York City, while weeping all the way, driving on four-lane highways with cars whizzing by in a scary way. Driving to and in New York City requires a lot of nerve, and I had none left, but did it anyway. In the good old days I trusted in God, while crying or shaking in my boots. Much later (imagine!) I was told I should stay calm too—and never worry. So I don't worry anymore; but I get a stomachache!

He remembered me! "How are you?" he asked. "Terrible!" I answered. "I have many problems." In minutes, he met me in a restaurant, and heard my story. Then he got up and went into the restaurant's phone booth; but I had no idea why. He came back and told me he'd called the Shaykh's "doorkeeper" in Switzerland (Whitall Perry) and gotten advice for me: I should try to find a job in Geneva or in such and such cities, in various countries around the world, where there were normal groups of fuqara. Later, I wrote that eagle-eyed man down in "my book." He was Eric de Meyenbourg, one of the dearest, kindest, most truly noble men I've ever known.

Strangely (and significantly), he too was a German of noble birth; but totally different in character from the one who lied. It sure seems that nobility by birth and family resemblances are becoming less significant—as was predicted symbolically by Muhammad.[25]

In Sufi orders too, a shaykh may die these days and legitimately appoint one or more successor shaykhs, often his own sons; but they will not be

25 See Appendix V: Muhammad's Predictions About These End Times We Are In Now. I am thinking especially of the prediction that the slave girl will give birth to her mistress. Most commentators say that means the social order will become confused. I knew two men, of noble ancestry. One was indeed noble, whereas the other was not at all.

qualified. However, I've been told by several, more learned people, that initiations remain valid. God knows best; but do not assume, in these times, that the successors of a great shaykh are like him. I think all the great *Turuq* (plural of *Tariqah*) have decadent branches, but God knows best.

Later, I would love that good, noble German's children too, and I'd find a perfect husband for his precious daughter. By now, in old age, I've known many people I'll love and admire forever; but they aren't all in any Tariqah (which had the cream of the crop in my eyes—or so I thought for decades), nor are they all Muslims.

The dream of the sacred plate

After my momentous, second encounter with "the man at the top of the stairs" in the restaurant, he took me for a walk through the New York City Zoo. That was delightful—especially with his wise comments. Then I saw his apartment, in which was the first Islamic object I'd ever seen. On a wall, he had a large pottery plate covered with Arabesques, and the words: ولا غالب إلا بالله "There is no Victor except God." Those words are on the great Alhambra in Spain. Having no idea of Muslim manners, I so admired that plate that he took it down and gave it to me! For years I treasured it, and then gave it to his daughter for her wedding present.

Meanwhile, I had the only sacred dream in my life. In it, my father played the role of a teacher: No shaykh was in the dream, despite my being so concentrated upon being initiated by the Shaykh in Switzerland. Well, I saw my father in the basement of our old house in Arden, Delaware, and I was only a child about six years old, watching him make pottery, as he used to do. Somehow, we had just learned that some visitors were coming; but I had no clothes on, and although I was a child, I was embarrassed.

Unconcerned as he always was about material things, when I asked him for a garment, my father nonchalantly handed me a pottery plate. It was the plate that Eric de Meyenbourg (the man at the top of the stairs) had given me! With that on my lap, I welcomed the visitors. The plate was not large enough to cover me, but it grew, and our visitors—not noticing that it was only a plate—found me elegantly dressed!

In the dream and when awake, I realized that one of the roles of my unmaterialistic father was to teach me to trust in God. He used to recite poetry, and would often say:

Safe upon the solid rock
The ugly houses stand

Come and see my shining palace
Built upon the sand!

(Edna St. Vincent Millay)

Strange encounters with sleazy characters

Once, I decided to move out from living with my mother; but I hadn't enough money to support her and live in any reasonable way, so I rented a room in quite a cheap boarding house, on a street that teemed with pretty sleazy characters. My room was big, and very nice though—with a balcony, and a communal kitchen right beside it.

The first evening, when I moved in, all the rather "fallen" (but vaguely intellectual) characters in the house, had gone to a party, so I explored the kitchen. It was a mess, so I spent hours cleaning everything, and I still remember that I even had to wash the bar of soap. Well, in the wee morning hours, my new neighbors came home. And one man was insulting me, in that kitchen, right outside my door, saying they couldn't find anything anymore, and that, in so many words (which I wouldn't mention) I was not welcome.

Hoping to survive there, I stepped right out and looked at my accuser: "Have you ever heard the ancient story about the man in Persia, who knew how to talk to animals?"

"No," he said; but he looked interested (those young people were all intelligent—just depraved for the moment, and tasting their freedom or something I can't quite understand myself, so how can I convey it)?

I dared to continue my story: "Well, there really was a poor farmer in Persia, and he had many animals he could talk to; but one was a somewhat skinny donkey. The farmer hadn't enough good food for all of his animal family, so he told his donkey, 'Here: Let me wrap you in this lion's skin; then you go over to our rich neighbor's field, and have a feast. Come home before the sunset prayer time; but no matter what: Don't bray.' So his donkey had a lovely day—eating and frolicking in a lush, green field. But when another donkey brayed, he brayed back! So the rich farmer ran to him, pulled off that lion's skin, spanked the poor thing, and sent him galloping on home." That man who had insulted me wasn't looking too impressed; but I wasn't through with him. I asked him: "Do you know what the moral of this story is?"

"No," he said flatly, pretending to be both insolent and bored.

"Well, if you're a donkey, don't bray!"

Then he finally burst out laughing, and everyone else started laughing too. Having just barely gotten away with that, I somehow managed to stay there for a while, but then, as ever, I ended up going back to living with my mother.

She had a sweeter and gentler kind of humor than I do; and she could keep the attention of really intelligent graduate students—nothing like those characters in my cheap boarding house. Once she was at a party, and someone asked her how her weekend had gone so far. She only told her audience how she had put quarters in our apartment's washer and dryer. What a subject! The room full of graduate students laughed away! She didn't know a single joke; but she was kindly and gently hilarious in recounting the simplest things!

Spiritually, I'll never know what she believed; and I never dared ask. She was sure she'd go to heaven though; and she told me: "When I'm in heaven, and I hear a voice behind me saying, 'Well! Am I ever surprised to find you here!' Then I'll know you have arrived, Maudie!" She was pretty sure of herself with God, Who owns heaven, although she never mentioned Him that I heard of. I sure hope she was right to be sure of heaven, because if I get there, I sure would love to find *her* there!

All through my life, until going to Switzerland in the next chapter, my mother was always there somewhere—with her gentleness, her humor and her loving kindness. Once she did come to visit me in Switzerland; and when she walked into my living room, she exclaimed, "Oh Maudie! I've never seen such beauty in my life!" She would die alone though, while I was in a "Heaven on earth."

PROOF

Chapter 6
Heaven on Earth

"There is no real life but the life of the Hereafter..."
Hadith, Sahih Bukhari and Muslim

Goodbye America!

As soon as my new friend, the noble German, had called the Shaykh's doorkeeper in Switzerland, I devoted myself to finding a job in another country; but I moved heaven and earth, trying to find one in Switzerland, because that was where the Shaykh lived. Having no idea what I was doing, or what the laws were, I must have written to 99 companies before learning that, by Swiss law, I could only get a permit to live in Switzerland if I found a job with an international governmental organization.

After months of refusals, I received a flat, boring answer, asking me to send a handwritten letter back. Surprising! My handwriting would be analyzed by a graphologist. That sure seemed odd, but it was for UNESCO, so I concluded that graphology had a good reputation in Switzerland. Soon I had a job! (And imagine! Wouldn't you know it: Years later I went to meet that graphologist and inform myself. For some reason, I had an instinct to find out about things. I kept storing them up—to share my adventures with you).

You wouldn't believe it, but I was still talking to (and half believing in) the German faqir, who said he'd buy my car for the American alcoholic faqir. Fine: He would pay me $1,000; but guess! He never did. I'd call, and he'd say, "I'll send you a check." I'd drive to where he was: He'd say, "I forgot my checkbook." Finally, I saw he'd never pay, and I didn't have enough money to

leave. Distressed, I told my new friend, Eric de Meyenbourg, also known as Sidi Khalil (Khalil means "friend of God" in Arabic and it was a name of Abraham). He asked me, "How much do you need?" I said, "$1,000." He took out his checkbook and wrote me a check for $1,000, which I gave back later to his daughter in Switzerland.

Then he invited my very nervous and snobbish mother out to dinner at a fine French restaurant. Although she had been horrified by seeing the Shaykh in the dark, she melted when he told her good, humanly understandable things about the Shaykh. The French restaurant didn't do any harm either: She was being treated like a lady. Then, when the time came for me to leave, he came with her to the airport to see me off, and made sure she was all right. I can't think of anything sweet enough to say: I myself needed a plane to fly; but in the Next World, maybe that man will have wings.

The polkadot suit

After arriving in Geneva, Switzerland, I had to take a taxi to a hotel. Lo and behold, I saw the streets: They looked exactly like the streets around Harvard University! There were people in all kinds of dress, of all races and nations. This time they hadn't come together to study though: They were in Geneva due to the United Nations building and all its related organizations, big and little. Switzerland (like India in quite a different way, and big cities in quite other ways) contains the whole world. There were people, stores and restaurants there from most of the countries of the world. If one wanted Japanese, Tibetan or Turkish clothes or food, it was as easy to find them as falling off a log.

I spent the night in a hotel, and then took a train to the other end of Lake Geneva, which was so long that it had another name at the other end: On the Geneva end, where I would work, it was called Lake Geneva. At the other end, where I'd eventually live, it was called Lake Lausanne. And on the Swiss side of that lake were the mountains of Switzerland, but looking across the lake, one saw the snow-covered mountains of France. When I took that train ride, I saw the fields of wheat and vineyards, neatly arranged in steppes cut into the sides of mountains. Scattered in the wheat fields, were bright red poppies.

The Shaykh's "doorkeeper," Whitall Perry (Sidi Abdul Qayyum) met me at the train station, and drove me to his house, next door to the Shaykh's. His house was so beautiful inside, with everything being in the most wonderful traditional taste, or made nicely of light-colored wood, that I was overwhelmed by beauty and gracefulness. That was to be my state for at least fifteen more years too. They were wealthy; but instead of living in a pretentious mansion, their wealth had been spent on the best traditional rugs and bed covers from Morocco; and they had artefacts, in use, from several cultures. Behind their

house was a great expanse of lawn, with a pool and trees; but what their wealth had really obtained was a perfect view on Lake Lausanne, with the snow-covered mountains of France on the other side.

Next door, the much more modest, but also perfect, house of the Shaykh, had the same view; but there, the backyard was like a little wildlife preserve, full of wild Columbines and other wildflowers, peeping up through high grass. It was a precious place, because Catherine Schuon (Sayyidah Latifah), the Shaykh's wife, had an inimitably fine sense for virgin nature.

I was in seventh heaven, and met the doorkeeper's wife again that night too: Barbara Perry (Sayyidah Hamidah), who was soon to become my best friend, and their two children, Mark, 14, and Catherine, 12. They all—their house, and their words—were passionately interesting to me, and the little Catherine was a charmer.

In Cambridge, where Harvard is, I'd already met the Perrys, who had seemed awfully puritanical there; but in their own home in Switzerland, they were completely different. In Cambridge, I'd seen them, after the evening in the dark, when I was wearing a modest, slightly scoop-necked blouse; but once I'd escaped from them I told my liar friend and our mutual, alcoholic comrade, that I'd felt, looking at the Perrys, as if my blouse should have come up tight under my neck. To my delight, they'd both laughed over that. Us three were in cahoots.

When it came time to pray at the Perrys' house that evening, I opened my little suitcase—taking out a prayer garment, sewn for me by an aunt of Dr Nasr's. They did not outwardly laugh out loud when they saw it, but soon I'd realize that it looked quite ridiculous, and the queenly, great saint wife of the Shaykh gave me a Moroccan kaftan before anyone else would ever see me in that thing. It was navy blue, covered with big white polkadots, and had some kind of a headpiece that covered all but my eyes. Those people were all chock full of intelligence, learning and inter-cultural experience. Humor was not lacking either. They had everything.

Their garments, furnishings and manners were in impeccable taste; and the milieu, the atmosphere everywhere, was so gorgeous—but seemed unpretentious too—that I was in seventh heaven. Every few minutes, someone would say the most interesting thing I'd ever heard! Honestly (well, I'm always honest) I haven't recovered from those indelible impressions yet, over fifty years later.

The Perrys' little twelve year old daughter, now over 65, is still my friend. In comparing notes, after decades of separation, I found out that she's in the same boat! We see eye to eye—and not only about that inimitable beauty (Neither one of us can give that up), but also on many things that no one in the world will ever have in common with us two old friends. It's as if we grew up together, in the childhoods of our lives, although I was 26 when we met, and she was only 12. We would live and die together, in several ways; but it

was mostly the deaths we'd have in common. Spiritually, we met a divide in the road, and you'll see that throughout my life and yours.

I had to abandon my mother!

Soon, I had my first meeting with the gracious Sayyidah Latifah, who told me a little bit about the Shaykh. For one thing, she said he was not concerned about the truth on a low plane, due to the efforts of modern-day people to be against spiritual ways. That didn't bother me.

Then I told her, "As soon as I get settled, I'll get an apartment, and live with my mother, who I left all alone in the United States." She replied that "we" were a secret group, devoted to contemplation and withdrawn from the world. If my mother were living with me—and that was my choice—no one would visit me. Surprising news!

Then we talked about my past, and those two men. I was still trying to find some good in them; but she said I saw circles as squares and squares as circles. Then she mentioned what she had noticed about them: Finally, I saw that she was dead right, and I forgot them. She asked me not to tell anyone anything about them, and over the years I realized that she always kept Tariqah controversies and unsavory people out of conversations. Actually, she played a tremendous role, and with a strong hand. This is hard to explain though: She maintained the image of the Tariqah "with a very firm hand." It was displayed to "the world" as pure and lovely; intellectual and aristocratic; full of talented, attractive and successful people.

At the end of my visit with that "queen of the world," who had a heavenly glow in my eyes, I had to admit something so embarrassing that I began to pour down tears. Well no: My tears didn't go "down"—not one did! I was laughing nervously at the same time, and somehow, that was making my tears bounce out into the room! With her usual calm and simple dignity, she asked what was the matter? I had to tell her that I hadn't enough money to put gas in my car and get back to my hotel (at the Geneva end of the lake), which was still my only home. The little town of Pully (at the Lausanne end of the lake) was much further than I'd thought. She calmly disappeared and came back with money. I thought she might be too elevated to have anything to do with that!

No more mother

During my first year there, I was quite distressed due to my mother. Living with her was tough; but she had been through a lot because of me. Who could stand having only one adored daughter and then having her become a Muslim *and* follow a Shaykh one couldn't even see—a man who seemed to be wrapped up in sheets, in a barely lit room? I was all my mother had left in the world;

she was tender-hearted, and far too old to work as an architect anymore. How could I even support her? My salary would have been sufficient if we were living together in Switzerland, as planned; but I was stuck! And she was stranded in her old age.

Being an exceedingly competent woman, she made her apartment gorgeous, but then moved to a less nice one, and rented the one she'd fixed up to some delighted person. Then she went to Goodwills and Salvation Army stores, bought old furniture, re-made and painted it, till she had another lovely apartment, and sub-let that one furnished. I was sending her what I could too; but soon, she came to the end of being able to live, so she took a job—the only one possible, taking care of a lady, who was ill.

Before Christmas, a letter came: That lady was accusing her of stealing things, and was mean! Although my mother was a happy person, who had never complained in her life, I saw that she had nowhere to go next. She used to say, "The world is so full of a number of things, that I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings!"

In Switzerland, in a crisis, the disciples used to say 100 or 1000 "Ya Latifs." That's a Divine Name, meaning The Subtle, The Aware, and I had seen that crises were dissolved, when the fuqara invoked that Name in a certain way. So, on New Year's Eve, I said 1000 fervent Ya Latifs for my mother. But I had no idea what I was doing: As far I could make out, she was an atheist; but I'd never asked her—instinctively not wanting her to define and "freeze" what might not yet be clear in her soul. That made saying Ya Latifs doubtful, but knowing no better, I did it.

In a few weeks, a letter came from my mother: On New Year's Day, when she was on holiday, that lady came to visit her. She brought a bottle of wine and a gift of extra money. But the best was that she said my mother was like a sister to her!

When the next letter came, everything had changed again: The lady's doctor had diagnosed her as paranoid! She needed a specialized nurse, and so my mother had no job, no way to survive anymore! I had to trust in God, and wondered what the answer to my Ya Latifs really was.

Very soon, I got more news: A pious and good Jewish family had hired my mother right away. She was to be a live-in companion for the family's dear wife and mother, named Saydi. Now Saydi was the best woman my mother had ever known. They loved one another more than sisters would; but Saydi was dying of cancer. In awaiting her death, my mother took care of her and lived in a traditional, Jewish household, full of God-fearing, good and considerate people.

Saydi died, with her head on my mother's lap. Soon thereafter, I got a call in the middle of the night: My father's family had found my mother dead, sitting in a chair! All night, I paced up and down, weeping. It didn't matter

a whit anymore that she had been an exceedingly difficult woman; I forgot everything—remembering her gentleness, and all the qualities that were in her—like jewels in a treasure chest.

Now I don't know if she died believing in God or not; I have hope, because she finally had the experience of living in that traditional, very pious, Jewish household. I'd have thought it would have been Muslim, but wonders never cease: God has ways beyond our understanding. Anyway, I pray for her to be forgiven, "For the sake of Thy Loving Kindness," and, in parenthesis I add, "I beg Thy mercy for her, because she had such a difficult daughter."

The man who kept young, with yoga and mountain climbing

After I'd been in my Swiss heaven for a while, I began to be accepted at the most divine majalis[26] in the Shaykh's house. Each Saturday evening, before the majlis proper, we would sit around a straw mat, unrolled in Sayyidah Latifah's room with the Shaykh seated above us on a beyond-anything-beautiful, but unassuming, divan, covered with a thin type of Moroccan rug. I could see him clearly then—otherwise, I only saw him at a distance in the majlis itself, until my first appointment with him. During the simple suppers, we all saw him, seated upon one of those gorgeous divan covers from Morocco. We had nothing that resembled the usual "beds" of the Western world, and if one has any taste for traditional beauty, then one never forgets the simple but elegant ambience in the Shaykh's house.

On one of my first few evenings, there were a few words said during dinner. It seemed that Sidi Abdul Ali (John Murray) had just written a letter defending the Shaykh against some enemy of the Tariqah, and the Shaykh told him that what he had written was exactly what he himself would have said. So imagine how impressed I was! Extremely sensitive and impressionable as ever, I thought that meant that Sidi Abdul Ali had some great mystical identity with the "unsurpassable spiritual master."

After dinner, we all stood up to gracefully separate the men from the women, and take our places for the *salat* (ritual, bowing and standing in prayer) and the *khutbah* or *mudhakkarah* (sermon) of the Shaykh. Then we all invoked out loud or silently until the majlis was over. It was all sublimely beautiful, in every detail. There was even a scent of sandalwood incense throughout the house, a bouquet of flowers on a big Chinese chest, and sometimes the angelic chanting of fuqara glorifying God, or singing in praise of Muhammad or sending peace upon the Blessed Virgin, Mary—called Maryam in Islam. No one can imagine how spiritually lovely those weekly gatherings were.

26 Sufi prayer gatherings. The singular is majlis.

In the States, I had seen Dr. Nasr several times, when he returned from Iran as a guest lecturer. The last time, there he was with a wife and a small son, Vali Reza, who is now a known scholar. For some reason, Dr. Nasr told me, "There's a man in Switzerland, who would make a perfect husband for you!" Guessing who he meant, his wife said, "No, he's too old for her." But my great professor answered her, "No: He keeps young, with yoga and mountain climbing!" Apparently the gentleman in question, named John Murray, was an American Muslim, and so was I; but a Muslim, who did yoga? Really, that was a bit much for me! Nonetheless, when I saw I'd actually go to live in Switzerland, I was quite curious about that gentleman. After all, every word said by Seyyed Hossein Nasr was as if from the Words of God!

Well, that night after John Murray was praised, we all stood up. I was shocked! He was quite a short man—seeming to be a good bit shorter than me. His face was handsome enough, and one wouldn't have guessed he was so short.

I got over that, like I'd get over his being 57 when I was 26; and I'd get over things far more strange than you can imagine now, because all that's ever counted for me is the spirit. In addition, I was to live among geniuses and extremely talented, gifted people for much of my life. Many of us were quite original and full of imagination; but maybe, in the end, I was to take the cake. When push came to shove—as it always does, I didn't care how many rules I'd break or who I'd disagree with—*even* my beloved Sayyidah Latifah. Looking for the truth with a capital T, sure can lead one into unexpected territory!

One evening, a precious family invited me to dinner. Really, the father, Sidi Arqam, was to die as a saint. He had a dear wife, Sayyidah Faridah, and two little rascal daughters I'd always love. They were friends with Sidi Abdul Ali, who lived alone there in Switzerland, and so did I: Maybe only because we were both alone, they invited us together.

At one point, he was telling a story about how he'd been on a mountain hiking trip with the great faqir, a saintly man: Sidi Ibrahim.[27] There were three men, and they'd gotten lost; therefore being forced to walk many extra miles. Totally exhausted, and with their feet in pain and seeming like scrambled eggs, suddenly Sidi Ibrahim took off running "LICKEDY SPLIT!" The other two were astonished; but slow as snails they made their painfully slow way to the hotel on the mountain's top. And there was Sidi Ibrahim, relaxing. Asked what had gotten into him, he answered that he wanted to get the pain over fast

27 We were 99.9% Occidentals, who had been converted to Islam, and taken Arabic names, as do most people who are converted to Islam. Those names are of Prophets, saints, great people, or the words for virtues. My name, Aminah, means trustworthy and honest; but it is also an epithet of Muhammad, and I choose it myself. Ibrahim means Abraham; and Abdul Ali means the worshipper of the Most High. Sidi and Sayyidah are usually used for great respect; but in my Tariqah everyone was called Sidi or Sayyidah. In Arab societies, Muslims call one another "brother, sister, mother…"

(Actually, he was the best of them, and his idea was profound: Suffering briefly here below is also nothing in view of the only real life in the next world).

Sidi Ibrahim was loved and admired by all: He was a gentle, contemplative soul, who was as good as gold to everyone. Only much later was I to realize that he hadn't a grain of common sense in one way; but oh my goodness, you can't imagine all the strange things that exist. I think I've seen a lot of them, and I'll tell you; but you're in for some ride! On a roller coaster!

Well that night, precisely when and sort of because Sidi Abdul Ali used the words "lickedy split," I fell in love with him! We were like brother and sister souls: Spiritually-minded to death, American, from the same kind of family, speaking the same language that "Sammy" spoke... and well, I just loved John Murray.

Later I found out that he too had graduated from Harvard, thirty years before me, and he and I had even lived on the same street: Sparks Street, in Cambridge, near where Harvard is. He too remembered the only saintly professor there. Remember: I told you about Professor Taylor, who taught Medieval history? Whether one ends up Muslim or Christian, one always loves the Christian Middle Ages; and if there's a saintly professor somewhere, he'll be the one who stands out for all spiritually-minded folks. May that good professor be blessed, for the humble, gentle goodness he radiated—letting everyone know that God is good.

After the lovely evening at Sidi Arqam's house, Sidi Abdul Ali started inviting me for mountain hikes each weekend. He even bought me a fantastic pair of mountain shoes, strong as could be, heavy as an ox—and I wished I could donate them to some museum;, but he finally got the idea, had mercy on me and got me a less weighty pair.

My old lady, precious and saintly friend, Lucie von Dechend, gave me clues: She taught me how to make lentils the way he liked them. "People" seemed to find it charming that Sidi Abdul Ali finally had a friend, as he'd been living alone there for some forty years. In his apartment's bedroom, there wasn't even a bed; he slept on a mattress on the living room floor, and everything was a mess. I doubt anyone really thought I'd marry him: He was twice my age and shorter, but we were a cute and odd couple of pals.

Those mountain trips were tough for a month or so. Whenever I got too far behind, he'd sit down and wait for me; but when I caught up with him, off he'd go! He got lots of rest waiting for me, but I got none. He did love the lentils though, and I finally informed him about my "situation," and he started being easier to keep up with. But have you ever read about initiatic trials? Each week, he'd take me to a higher mountain, much harder to climb, and I thought this was some kind of a rite of passage. While I was getting used to the high mountain climbing near Lake Lausanne, I was also getting used to the people and places where I worked—at the other end, where it was called Lake Geneva.

Finding a place in heaven

Soon I'd find an apartment and start working at UNESCO's International Bureau of Education. Then I'd attend my first majlis, in the Shaykh's jewel of a house; but every single thing is hard to describe, especially because I was always overwhelmed, *or* in hot water.

Finding an apartment and getting a car, at the end of the lake where I wa working... those tasks were like pulling teeth, as I was young, alone in a foreign country, and knew only a smattering of French. I couldn't read the newspapers to find apartments for rent, and whenever I made a move, something went very wrong.

Once I went into a phone booth, but couldn't understand the instructions to save my life: That phone would *not* accept my coin to let me call. In tears, I dragged myself back to the expensive hotel, where I was living, while wasting money. With the help of a kind English-speaking desk clerk, I called several faqirat in Pully, where most of them lived—practically begging for help. No one would budge; I was supposed to be able to take care of myself, but I was young and feeling terribly lost—doing everything wrong in a strange land. In that Tariqah, everyone was self-sufficient, adult, and had to have, consequently, some qualities of mature men. I managed just fine, and the exercise made me quite, astonishingly strong and independent. God gave me what I needed—even enough humor to get through red tape wherever I went. Whenever you move, you meet lots of red tape: When that gets thick, it improves one's sense of humor.

Somehow, I managed to see some precious country villages, and was longing to live in one; but in desperation I had to take an apartment above a house in a modernized farm town, far from my job. The owner, I later found out, was known for his new method of raising pigs—in small, dark cells; but their meat was exactly the same while costing less to produce. Annoyed to death, by the people and that idea of pig-raising, I tried to move. It wasn't the pigs that bothered me though. I was used to those; it was their owner.

My job, boss and colleagues, were quite nice, but scary: My all-Swiss young lady colleagues were sophisticated, knew all about wines and were used to parties, which I was expected to attend. Just a big detail for me was that they had so many kinds of forks and spoons at the table, that I had no idea what to use for what! At first you'd have thought they'd never known an American; and I, for sure, had never known a European. I had seen people from all countries at Harvard; I went to school with them, and then worked mostly with Arabs from Lebanon, with a Persian in there too. But this time, I was actually *living* in another culture; and, as usual, I was a Muslim in secret.

The day of my mystical vision

One day, I was walking on a mountain road—for some reason alone. On one side were quite green, perfect-seeming pine trees. In one I saw a little, brightly colored parakeet. Charmed, I thought, "Oh, it has escaped from its cage." But in the next tree, there were several, and they were kissing one another! Quite surprised, on I went a bit further: The trees were full of kissing parakeets! Having read many books on mysticism and such subjects, on the many many floors of the largest university library in the world, Harvard's Widener Library, where I'd worked (It seemed as if there were twenty floors underground, and as a librarian, I was allowed to explore them); well, I was convinced that I was having a vision of some kind, and maybe I began to cry.

Then I looked on the other side of the road, where there were houses and little farms. Many brown and colored birds were flying into one of the yards—and there was a sign in French: *"Les oiseaux sont libres; ils reviennent."* (The birds are free; they come back). So someone was putting out heaps of grain so a multitude of parakeets could be free! On purpose, they were also feeding all the wild birds around! That struck me as such a charity, to birds and mankind, that I tried to copy it long after. Later, when I lived in Pakistan, I bought a big cage, full of charming parakeets of all colors. One day, I left the door open, so they could be free to visit the trees, but come back to their cage for food. Alas, they just all flew away and probably died. My adopted son-in-law had known that would happen, just as he'd known about some of my other convictions regarding animals; but he had too much respect for me to say anything, alas! The whole village was devoted to animal husbandry; I was a bit of a dreamer.

The wild bleeding hearts

Another time in Switzerland, when I was walking alone in dense woods, I came upon a hidden pond. Obviously no one had been there for years: One could tell by the wildness of the growth around it, which had no signs of footprints. Although I was a bit scared due to being so alone in the wild, I dared draw nearer to that pond. It was surrounded by countless, wild, bleeding hearts! Again, I felt as if I were seeing heaven on earth, and all in all, it was a blessed time of life, but nature was one part of it; knowledge was another.

Lausanne was the name of the city nearest the Shaykh's little town, called Pully, which happens to mean "pole"—I think in Latin, so we all thought the name of the town was symbolic. You see, we knew he was the greatest Muslim saint alive, and that therefore, he was the "Qutb." That's an Arabic word meaning pole; but it denotes the greatest saint in a period of time—the one around whom the real world of the spirit revolves. There were miracles, signs, symbols, visions and locutions in our daily lives—all convincing us of the greatness of

Frithjof Schuon. At his end of the lake, I had a different life, but even more marvelous. I'll tell you about it.

All I want is reform

It was as if I had two lives, at the two ends of the lake. At the Geneva end, my office building, not far from the enormous United Nations main building, looked out on the lake. Attached to the building where I worked was a museum devoted to education in all the countries of the world, with little rooms and displays. Well, the nicest one by far, was for Morocco. It had low benches; I could even fall asleep on them during Ramadan, as the exhibition was closed during our two-hour lunch breaks. Looking out upon the lake, and its famous water jet, was a graceful, Moroccan style arch. Above that arch, was a fine example of Arabic calligraphy, saying: وما توفيقي إلا بالله (My success comes only from God). The first time I saw that, I was filled with awe, and God forgive me for being self-centered if I was wrong: I thought that was there for me! I didn't know exactly what it meant then; but later those words went straight to my heart. In the Quran, it is the Arabian Prophet, Shuyaib, who says that. He's one of only a few Prophets who are mentioned only in the Quran—unknown to Christians. He was a reformer, saying actually, to give a long explanation: My desire is to do all I can for the reform (of my people). Whether I succeed or not, is only in the hands of God." The literal meaning is brief: "My success will come only from God."

Now Arabic is a sacred language. In scholarly terms, it's called a "liturgical" language, a language in which God, Himself spoke. There are words in Arabic, like the word for "success" here, which are not exactly translatable, due to their profundity. Success here, is absolutely only what comes from God. No matter what you do, you cannot achieve it, unless He grants it. That idea can become deeper and deeper throughout one's life, as one keeps returning to "God-only" ideas. It isn't at all that nothing else exists, but it only exists *in* Him, and because of Him; He is in charge; He is the Beginning, the End, the One who decides, Who makes live and die. Other causes are just illusions; but that became absolutely obvious to me, only when I was about 80 years old.

For three years, I worked there, and it was such a fine time in my life. My young lady boss, Lilianne, was skeptical about religion, but as a boss, she was ideal: Unimaginably caring and considerate. She even loved me too; and I deeply appreciated and cared for her; but we had nothing really in common. All my colleagues were women and Swiss; but we had mostly men come from every country in the world for conferences on education.

At first, I'd had to live in a house on the farm that inhumanely raised pigs. I think that town, which was a nothing as country towns go, was called Nian, and it was an inconvenient place to live—far from my office. Well, as soon as

I knew a little French, and could find my way around, I took a newspaper and headed for more rural country towns not too far from Geneva.

One day I was out looking, in lovely countryside, when I passed a house that was like a dream. Out front were a dozen peony bushes, in full bloom! That reminded me of my old home in Arden, Delaware, which had many peonies out front—one of my favorite flowers. But I couldn't find the address in my newspaper, so I finally drove up to a house and asked. The apartment for rent was in that house with the peonies out front! My heart was overwhelmed, as often in Switzerland, and I knocked on the door. In it lived two old parents and an unmarried daughter, Monique. The so-called "apartment" was two rooms upstairs, with a washbasin. The kitchen and bath I'd share with Monique. Oh I loved that place so much, I wouldn't have cared what I shared with who; but I soon loved Monique, and her parents too. The old kitchen we shared was out of heaven; and I think it was a Buddhist heaven, called The Pure Land. It was painted the color of Buddhist monk's robes, a color that warmed my heart. You've all seen that: It's a very warm, rosy ochre—unique among colors... and I love colors so much that I think I could have written a PhD thesis on them, without doing any scholarly reading. My soul was *made* for colors—and that particular color, was for me, like what some gypsy music is for others!

Behind the house, seen from "our" kitchen, was a big garden of fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers. That was the love of Monique's life; and almost daily, she brought me things from it—not that I couldn't pick all I wanted too. On the other side of my two rooms, was a dirt road, and what seemed like miles of wheatfields, which rippled like waves on the ocean, when the wind blew—as if the wheat were water. I wasn't just happy there; I was in love. It was maybe twenty minutes from my office, and in the evenings, I'd go for walks, where I met horses, cats, dogs and goats. A little walk away was one of the dozens of little Swiss restaurants I'd go to—where everything was simple, but perfectly cooked, spiced and colorfully decorated (my favorite part of food)!

On top of the Matterhorn

Finally, at the other end of the lake, Sidi Abdul Ali and I ended up alone, on top of the Matterhorn, the highest mountain in Switzerland. Thank goodness we hadn't walked; we'd taken one of those unbelievable mountain trains they have there, which climb mountains, using a totally different principle than the usual trains: They hop. On top there was only snow and ice in sight; it was freezing cold and there was a bitter wind. He embraced me lovingly there, and then asked me, "Do you know how old I am?"

"Fifty-six?"

"No," he said, "I'm fifty seven."

I don't remember what I said next, but it was obvious that neither of us cared about anything anymore—not even the glacial cold up there on top of the Matterhorn. We loved one another, and we were getting married.

Not having been born yesterday, it didn't bother me when I soon saw his apartment looking like a trainwreck; I had an idea of how incompetent men can be without women. But he had a bedroom: Nothing was in it but an enormous bump or lump, about the size of an elephant. That thing was draped with sheets.

"And *what* is *that*?" I stammered.

"My books are under there; they arrived here from the US decades ago; but I haven't gotten around to organizing them yet."

"Oh really," said I, "All you do is read, so how are you finding the books?"

"I know exactly where each one is, and pull one out—carefully putting it back in the same place."

Then, somehow, I got to see in his cupboards and closet: Those were more surprising. He had a shirt that was more hole than cloth, and a heap of pieces of old string. Alarmed, I asked, "Don't you ever throw anything away?" He had a precious sheepish look: Abashed, trapped and innocent-looking all at once. He said, "To tell you the truth, I haven't thrown away a single thing in 30 years!" Lifelong I've had the impression that I've seen everything and been everywhere; but that husband was going to surprise the life out of me.

After we'd been married for a while, he explained: His father had died when he was quite young, and his mother was suddenly obliged to work to provide for herself and for him. Unable to manage, she put him in a series of catastrophic half-orphanages., She would pay his expenses, but he would eat, play and learn with boys in similar kinds of trouble. The problem was that the lady who ran one orphanage, tried to save money for herself: She had little children sleeping in closets and drawers and nourished only with oatmeal. After some years, my husband stopped growing—and that was why he was rather short.

Well, just at the last moment, a wealthy, brilliant and eccentric aunt adopted him. She sent him to the best private schools, in the high mountains of... Switzerland! There, he grew quickly and then thrived, living with her in a mansion. But the experience of poverty had scared Sidi Abdul Ali: He felt insecure, and in spite of all his intelligence and learning, he let that influence his trust in God. Most of the world's people are poor, but they are happy due to faith. Wise as he was, my new husband had a strong weakness. I'd have to deal with that all during our 24-year-long "marriage." There are lessons in all our lives: You could be writing a book too, and not the least of those lessons comes from people we love, in spite of everything.

Three days after we started living together, I lost my temper, but didn't tell him. He wanted to take *six months* to empty his old apartment, while we'd be

paying two rents; and I was the one who was mostly paying, by having a job that required four hours trip a day. Naturally, we had to live near the Shaykh, at one end of the lake, but my job was in Geneva, at the other end. The man I'd married hadn't been efficacious enough to put away his books in thirty some years; but now it was me, who had to pay for his being extremely impractical. Steaming mad, I started thinking: If I wanted to stay married, I had to be the one to submit. Every crew member knows the boat will sink unless there's only *one* captain in charge. I dropped my case; but when I confided in friends, they were horrified by many things I had to put up with. He literally had nightmares about my giving his things away and he did *not* want to pay the Islamic "tax " (*Zakat*) which one must give for the poor. I was horrified, paid in secret, and swallowed that too.

Once I happened to get up in the middle of the night. Out into the living room I stepped. Then I screamed bloody murder! It's a wonder our neighbors didn't wake up and call the police. Up near the ceiling, I saw a pair of feet! Once the lights were on, my new husband explained: When he couldn't sleep, he'd get up and do hatha yoga; and one of his favorite positions was standing on his head! Then I remembered Seyyed Hossein Nasr: "There's a perfect husband for you in Switzerland... he keeps young by *yoga* and mountain climbing!"

I really loved him, and we got along beautifully. He adored me; just hugging me for long times, and saying "Alhamdulillah!" (All gratitude and all praise is for God).

You may be thinking that we were all a bowl full of nuts living there around Frithjof Schuon, but not at all. Everyone there was extremely well-mannered, aristocratic and educated to unbelievable degrees. When I'd ask Sidi Abdul Ali a question—maybe I was curious about something a Queen of France once said, he would answer me, tell me about her character, all her courtiers and relatives, *and* the relationships of France at that time to all other countries. If I remained interested, he could also tell me what was happening in Russia, Japan, Indonesia - the whole world! But even that was only the beginning: He didn't only know what was *happening*; he also knew all the ideas, philosophies, religions, and I don't know how to say it: He knew all the wisdoms of time and space, and in levels... in different depths of importance. I felt as if I'd married knowledge itself, which was just the kind of thing I'd always fall in love with. I'd loved Andy, and then worshipped Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

In my whole life, I've never met anyone who had more books, and loved them as much—except one friend I have now. Before he'd asked me to marry him, Sidi Abdul Ali had made sure that I did not want children, *and* that I intended to work. Due to some visa rules in Switzerland, he had a pretty low-paying job, teaching little boys in a private boys' school. Although brilliant, and having a Master's degree in Archaeology, he was fenced in, because he was willing to sacrifice his material life in order to live near Frithjof Schuon.

Me too. I understood all that; but earning a living happened to be easier for me. I had Masters degrees in library science and another one in Semitic languages. Having a rare skill, typing in Arabic, made me stand out too.

Lifelong, Sidi Abdul Ali did not, nor would he ever, want to be responsible for anyone or anything. He couldn't stand up for the truth either; but once you get married, you find out that "marriage is half of religion!" (Hadith). Long after he had passed away, someone told me he was a jellyfish. Well yes, he had no backbone; but he had so many other qualities that we got along perfectly... That is, until push came to shove. You'll see. The eternal type of marriage requires so much of both partners, that one can deeply appreciate a hadith: Marriage is half of religion; and it sure takes two halves to stick together.

It wasn't only by standing on his head in the dark, that Sidi Abdul Ali surprised me. I hadn't the faintest idea that he was really a Japanese man! Not only was his soul Japanese, he studied tai-chi, surrounded himself with Japanese things, *and* heaven help us—he wanted me to be like a Japanese wife: Dignified, formal, moving gently about our apartment. But, like most Americans, I was helter skelter—throwing doors shut, shuffling things noisily about.

My husband was extremely sober, contemplative and intellectual—totally unimpressed by emotions, exaggerations, dreams or visions. And believe it or not, I'm usually quite a reasonable sort too, so we got along fine. But one day some character in my office told me I was hysterical. So naturally, when I got home that day, and saw my husband sitting somewhere, I sat down next to him, to get a reasonable answer. I asked him, "Am I hysterical?" He calmly replied: "Not at the moment!"

Another time, we were sitting opposite one another at our kitchen table... but first, I have to explain some things: I was taller than he was, and rather more active. In comparison to me, he seemed a bit stodgy. He wasn't really, but as a couple, we looked pretty unlike one another. Then another thing was that we were both determined to have plain, real fruits and vegetables, so we subscribed to a service, which delivered a box full of fresh, organic vegetables every week. Well, if we didn't eat enough, then the next box would come, and we'd feel flooded with vegetables.

One day, too much was left, and he wasn't eating what was on his plate, so I got out a book on the virtues of endive, a Swiss salad-like thing. But he wasn't paying attention to me, and was doodling on a scrap of paper. Then I noticed that he had drawn a picture of us: I was a tall, thin lady, with her index finger raised, teaching. And opposite me, was a shorter, rather round fellow, taking it all in. Then underneath, he'd written: "The Daily Lesson."

My husband's bookshelves

A year or so went by, after the Shaykh had married me to Sidi Abdul Ali, who was the *Na'ib*. That was the highest rank of dignitary, but there were also *Muqaddams* whose names I've forgotten.

By destiny, I found the nearest apartment to the Shaykh's house—right at the foot of his garden. Then that was where Sidi Abdul Ali and I lived when we got married, and our position in space sure seemed to be a symbol of our spiritual nearness. More significantly, however, I was married to the Na'ib, so we would often be in the Shaykh's company, with Sayyidah Latifah, and the Qayyumids. I always felt as if I were floating around in heaven somewhere; but I had to work and traveled about five hours a day, so sometimes I collapsed from exhaustion. If it weren't for that, I might have enjoyed some high mystical state; but as it was, well I can't describe it; but once some fuqara were at our house, and we were about to say the *wird* (rosary). I just lay down on the divan, and said, "Wake me up when it's over!" The following year, those same fuqara came back and reminded me of it; but they weren't at all shocked; they loved my realism. On the whole, the disciples of Frithjof Schuon had originality, piety, humor, and just so many qualities that I really loved them. Now, in looking back, I only remember one faqir who seemed boring to me; but after having found him a bore, I realized that he certainly had a saintly death. I had much to learn. All that glitters is not gold; and some people with no obvious shine are jewels.

I'm crazy about people and friendship, and I was quickly becoming best friends with both Sayyidah Hamidah (Barbara Perry) and Sayyidah Latifah (Catherine Schuon). They were quite different from one another; but I adored them both, while keeping some extra decorum with Sayyidah Latifah, because she was the Shaykh's wife, and also the spiritual mistress of all of us. In passing, she had the ways of a queen by nature; but she was also the daughter of a Swiss Ambassador, so she was used to living among internationally sophisticated diplomats, in various countries. She spoke seven languages, was brilliant and highly educated, but unpretentious too.

Soon, I gathered that Sayyidah Hamidah had a difficult character; but she was an extraordinary woman, whose *love* was inspired. She was the picture of profundity and total devotion to our spiritual master. As for Sayyidah Latifah, she was an eminently reasonable woman, rather dry, a bit aggressive in personality and ever aristocratic. In the Tariqah, she, for good reasons, was the governing Queen; and at home, she was the perfect wife—*always* defending the Shaykh with great intelligence and learning; but she was also supremely competent in taking care of him, as the perfect wife. All in all, she was an all-round competent person. Later, I'd meet pale examples of her kind of person, but oh dear! She was indescribably "large" and "round" as a human type—a

much bigger person than most. Some people are like thimbles full of soul; others ponds, or lakes. She was an ocean.

The day I became famous

Before I'd been married very long, my new husband and I went out to lunch with the Qayyumids, the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah. Since Sidi Abdul Ali was the only Na'ib then, and as he'd lived there for decades, I became included in the most marvelous outings; but the best were when we were in a small "family." Then, I got to see them all up close.

Sayyidah Hamidah, who was quickly becoming my best friend, happened to ask what my name, Maude, meant. We all knew that Murray meant "of Mary," and that was highly significant, because the Shaykh had been adopted by the Virgin Mary (Maryam in Islam). Later, he would name his Tariqah, the "Tariqah Maryamiyyah" after her, the most perfect woman who had ever lived, according to Islam.

Mary is the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran; she's mentioned 33 times. A chapter is named after her, and in one passage of another chapter, the names of many Prophets are mentioned: Then we are told to remember her too. Among scholars, there have been many discussions: Was she too a Prophet? She did receive some revelations and a great many Muslim women are named Maryam, after her, or they're named by an adjective describing her: The Virgin, the Truthful...

Later, when I worked at The Islamic Society in the United States, three of my colleagues had daughters, and they were *all* named Maryam. Our Secretary-General had twin sons too, one was named for Jesus, and one for Moses. Both are common Muslim names, but Isa (Jesus) is extremely common, as he represents the apex of Divine Wisdom in Islam. Muslims must believe in him, but sometimes you'd think they don't know it!

Well, that day at lunch, I answered Sayyidah Hamidah: "Maude is a diminutive of Madeleine and Magdalene; it's also, from another lingual direction, a diminutive of Matilda, which means 'winning in battle.'"

Oh dear! Sayyidah Hamidah started arguing with me; and she looked extremely upset, even pale! "Where did you get that idea?" she asked.

"Oh, I just looked it up in the dictionary once: That's what it said."

Everyone was staring at me! But I had no idea what was going on, or being thought. Only Sidi Abdul Ali looked as ever: Sober. He was too level-headed to be impressed by signs or symbols, dreams or visions. In fact, he was a bit opaque; but I deeply appreciated his sobriety.

Well: Everyone there knew that the Shaykh had been madly in love with Madeleine Oesch—*so* in love, that he had had some spiritual state or I forget what. They also knew that he had *two* women in his life already, and one was

Sayyidah Hamidah. Only *she* knew that the Shaykh had called her his Mary Magdalene; *and* (the plot thickens!) once he had opened the Quran about Madeleine: He found the passage in which God said that He gave a man *two* gardens! To him and to Sayyidah Hamidah, that meant that he would have *two* Madeleines as wives!

Sayyidah Hamidah became extremely jealous on the spot, and worried. Sayyidah Latifah was different though. Although they had squabbled for the last eight years, she was careful about Sayyidah Hamidah's tender heart. So was everyone, because when she loved someone, Sayyidah Hamidah *really* loved them, but with the Shaykh, that love was absolute. Secretly, she was a great poet too. She had only written a few poems, about the Shaykh, and later, when she let me read them, I loved her and him together: We invented the triple hug. Now those I'll always remember and want again. But life went on, for a long time, with Sayyidah Latifah protecting the heart of her rival; but I had no idea what was going on.

The night I spent in a hotel

After I'd been married to Sidi Abdul Ali for a while, I got mad; plain moved out, and went to a hotel. It happened to be Christmas Eve, and for some reason the Shaykh himself became the intermediator. He called Sidi Abdul Ali in first—finding him as ever: Sober, calm, reasonable, and much like a Japanese man at heart. Sidi Abdul Ali didn't *look* Japanese, but his personality, movements, character and taste were all too Japanese for words. Hard as I try, Muslim as I get, I'm a died in the wool American, and I had no idea I was marrying a man from Japan!

Once we went to a Japanese restaurant. Of course we ate with chopsticks: Everyone around the Shaykh knew the ways of all other cultures. After dinner, a man at another table waved for the waiter to come, so he could pay.

Sidi Abdul Ali whispered to me: "He is Japanese."

I said, "How do you know? He could perfectly well be *Chinese*."

"Only the Japanese use their hand like that to call someone; In all other countries that's a 'go away' gesture." Impressed, I kept quiet; but that man came over to our table! He asked my husband where he'd lived in Japan? Well, Sidi Abdul Ali had never been to Japan, but it seems his manners were so perfect that he seemed Japanese to the Japanese!

Impressed, I was weighing that fact for the next twenty-some years of living with him. Actually, it was a lovely side of my husband's nature: Well, it was more than a "side." But he had many possibilities: Once I came home from work, walked in the door, and found him dressed like a man from Bali! He was *not* a bore, and had a dry sense of humor too.

Well, the Shaykh had heard Sidi Abdul Ali's side, that night when I went to a hotel; then there I was, to tell my side. The verdict: I had to go home and write all my faults on a paper to keep under my prayer rug. Those faults I'd re-read until I'd improve myself, and up on top of the list, I still remember: It said, "Try to be more like a Japanese wife."

I belong to whoever belongs to Me!

Of course, I was dying to get to know the Shaykh better, even though I was afraid of him, so I kept fighting with myself, to ask for "appointments" as often as possible, because I thought that seeing him would kill my lower soul.[28] Every meeting with the Shaykh, upstairs in his study, was called an appointment, whether one was an old friend or a visitor from a foreign country. At first Sayyidah Latifah gave me appointments maybe every three weeks, then every two, and finally I was seeing him every week. I was beginning to find him much more human and personable; but once he said something brusque, and I was feeling a bit insulted or scared: I didn't want to see him anymore. Knowing what the lower soul is like, I quickly asked Sayyidah Latifah for another appointment, and I got it! After that, we started becoming friends.

Once I asked him '"Couldn't you treat me like an old shoe? Couldn't you just put me in a closet somewhere, so I could be here while you're writing?'" He said, very nicely, that he'd never treat me or anyone like an old shoe, and I was welcome to be outside of the closet and talk to him. So I saw that he knew what nobility was, and that insight of mine kept me going on and on, seeing him and trying to find questions that I could use—sometimes crazy questions, but just to get an excuse to see him, because I knew that would transform my soul.

So, what happened? Well one day, I told him a hadith qudsi, but I altered it. Today, I suspect that was a sin of mine; I distorted words of God; but He allows us to go astray, before He shows us the Way. I had quite some learning to go through, starting that day, and in spite of all I'd already been through, in every way!

He was sitting on one Moroccan pouf and I was on another: In between us, was a large, round Moroccan tray. I said, in Arabic: "God says 'I belong to whoever belongs to Me.' I belong to you, do you belong…?" Before I finished that sentence, he answered me in Arabic, saying, "And I belong to you!" Then, he reached across the tray and took my hand. Still understanding nothing, I went home.

During my next "appointment," he said something very strange. He said: "Don't tell Sayyidah Hamidah that we've become friends, that we are no longer

28 See Appendix VI: A Chart of Human Zones.

just master and disciple." I had no idea why he would say such a thing: The friendship was no surprise, but why a secret? I thought that the whole center of the Tariqah—that is, Sayyidah Hamidah, her husband Sidi Abdul Qayyum, Sayyidah Latifah—they were all in the center of an esoteric, sacred order; and I thought that I was being put through some sort of mystical initiatic trial, because things were happening that were out of the ordinary.

One day, I was downstairs, about to have an appointment with him, but I was chatting with Sayyidah Latifah down there first. Suddenly the doorbell rang three times. I had no idea what that meant, but she knew it meant Sayyidah Hamidah was there, and only she rang three times. Sayyidah Latifah quickly and skilfully (She did everything with great competence) grabbed my coat from the vestibule, practically picked me up, threw me into the Zawiyyah, shut the door and told me to keep quiet—tossing my coat in after me! This was a very dignified, aristocratic woman! I was quite surprised. I had no idea what was going on; but I thought this was part of my initiation, because I'd read strange books in those floors full of books which are under Harvard University Library.

Well I was in there and I heard Sayyidah Latifah talking to Sayyidah Hamidah. Then after a while Sayyidah Latifah just opened the door of the Zawiyah with her usual dignity, hung my coat back up and said, "You may go upstairs for your appointment." I cannot imagine to this day why she thought I would stay in there, quiet, and not ask any questions afterwards. She was an extraordinary woman, who had trust in God, and she thought that I was destined to be in her life and his. She always believed in his visions. So did I; but only she knew he'd had clear signs and a vision about me. I guess she trusted me due to the signs she thought came from Above.

Anyway, I went upstairs. Things were becoming more and more unusual. I had a sort of—not a suspicion, because it wasn't bad—I had a feeling, an intimation that the Shaykh was in love with me. But even after I had that idea, I had an interview one day and told him that I really loved Sidi Abdul Ali, my husband. He seemed surprised and disappointed by that. He asked me something about it. And somehow I knew that he wanted me to say that I didn't love Sidi Abdul Ali *as a husband*. And that was supposed to be because Sidi Abdul Ali didn't want to sleep with me anymore. He was so much older than I was that after we'd been married just a few years, he really was feeling too old. I had told Sayyidah Latifah one day that I felt like a flower without a bee. Actually, I still loved him just the same, but oh my! Actually, the Shaykh was older than Sidi Abdul Ali, but he was, to be subtle in speech, younger lifelong (in a way) as regarded women.

Unknown to me, Sayyidah Latifah had told the Shaykh about my being a flower without a bee, and soon, I'd go upstairs for an appointment, walk into his office; and find him with his arms wide open. He took me into his arms

and began to invoke while he was hugging me, sweetly. Believe it or not, I wasn't surprised; I had rather expected that. And I don't know what I said next, but he said, "I thought you wanted to invoke with me in the khalwah, holding hands." I had said that once, after we'd become friends. He had an adorable, holy-seeming, little room next to his study called the Khalwah; a room for retreats. He only prayed in there; but there was also a kind of mattress on the floor, covered with some beautiful Moroccan cloth.

Well, we went into that khalwah and invoked a little while holding hands and somehow we got to talking about the fact that they went to the Qayyumids' pool every day: Sayyidah Latifah and the Shaykh. Sayyidah Latifah would swim a little bit and he would just watch but never go swimming. Swimming wasn't dignified enough for him. But everyone else used to swim every day if it was good weather. And I said I was ashamed to go because I had a few spots of psoriasis on one side, and he said immediately "Oh that interests me, I'd like to see that." So of course that meant I was supposed to get undressed, and understanding perfectly well by then, I did get undressed and very soon he was making love to me. I had expected that too; but was nonetheless shocked and afraid of God. Obviously, he wasn't afraid of anyone; he never was. He was unsurpassably pious in a way; but he hadn't fear of God or reverence for the Qu'ran, the Sunnah or the Shariah. He sure *seemed* to have all those qualities; he taught them, and he could practise them. Well, you'll see: We will see together.

After we had been together only once like that, I had gone home and opened the Quran. I was scared, and I thought it was *Istikharah*[29] to open the Quran to ask Allah Ta'ala whether something was alright or not. I had opened the Quran about this making love to the Shaykh. And I had gotten the title of a Surah: Surah al-Mu'minun, I think. And it said there that it was revealed in Mecca: Surah al-Mu'minun, Makiyyah. To me that meant that we were all mu'mins, we were not just Muslims. We were sincere believers; and we were living in the center of the Tariqah, in Mecca; therefore, there were esoteric, secret reasons for things. So my head was quieter. The next time I saw him, I told him that I had opened the Quran and I had found that; he was content, but sure he had been right anyway.

Unlike Sayyidah Hamidah who was too esoteric to even ask him for eight years, whether she was a wife or a concubine or what, I asked right away, "Am I a wife or a concubine?"

He looked as if he were thinking for a minute, the way he often did when he was consulting his inner Self or Allah Ta'ala. And then he said "It must be that you are a wife."

29 Istikharah is an extra, ritual prayer which, if done correctly, lets you know God's will; and allows one to seek good from God in dire circumstances.

And I asked immediately, because I loved Sayyidah Hamidah and I wanted her to have good news: "May I tell Sayyidah Hamidah that she too is a wife?"

"Yes," he said.

Although Sayyidah Latifah and Sayyidah Hamidah had been arguing for eight years, Sayyidah Latifah did not want to hurt Sayyidah Hamidah's loving heart. And the Shaykh was afraid to tell her too! Finally, it became too inconvenient to keep a secret from her, because we had to keep her from knowing that I had appointments; and it all got so complicated that I decided to take matters into my own hands. So I went to see her one day and carefully broached the subject, finally telling her that I was his wife. She said "Are you *really* his wife?" I said "Yes, I am *really* his wife." And the poor dear: She just dissolved in tears, heartbroken and/or I know not what. I had not realized it could be that serious; but perhaps all those others who hadn't dared tell her anything understood better than I did? Anyway, it had to be done.

Soon, there in my arms, she seemed to be loving me, while her ego seemed to melt. Since we all knew she had quite some ego, I was indelibly impressed by that transformation. She and I became extremely close after that, because we were the two he made love to, and we both loved him as a husband. Very importantly: she hadn't asked him in all her eight years if she was a wife or what? I asked right away—and got permission to tell her she was a real wife! We also got new wedding bands, just like our old ones; and he put them on our hands.

Well, I pretended: I wasn't in love with him the way she was; but I did a good job of sincerely pretending, because I thought he needed me absolutely for his happiness and his well being; and I thought Allah Ta'ala wanted me to be his, *and* that it was the grace of my lifetime, *and* that the fuqara needed me to be his, that even the people who read his books at a distance, needed him to be well and happy *and* that his happiness was dependent upon me because he really needed me for his happiness and for his health because he was prone to have asthma, and the arguing of the two first wives had made his health much worse... and I'm a very peace-making kind of person just by nature, so without even trying I made a family out of us. I mean: My reasons were endless; I had to be his wife. Finally, I did love him too, because his love for me was so tremendous and touching, that he endeared himself to me. His being a multi-faceted genius quite included a gift for personality, love, charisma—I mean he was irresistible!

Sidi Abdul Ali, had never gotten along well with the Qayyumids; but I managed to sort of patch that up. And we became a family of six: the Qayyumids, the Abdul Alids, Sayyidah Latifah and the Shaykh. We travelled everywhere together, went to Morocco twice, to England to the First Festival of Islam and to France; and I don't remember all the places we went, but we went *together!* We were a family; that made me feel as if I were in a heaven on

earth, because I loved them all and their company so much. Each second was fascinating. They *all* had really difficult characters, and there were countless conflicts between them; but I hardly noticed, because they were all so interesting spiritually, psychologically, humanly and aesthetically. We lived in our own little traditional civilization, created by the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah, not by God.

I think it was because of me, that we became a somewhat coherent family. We even made Sidi Abdul Qayyum, the husband of Sayyidah Hamidah, feel a part of the family. That was tough, because he was a very dry and aloof sort of person.

Once I was in the family, everyone started confided in me and I understood so many things from everybody's different point of view. This was the beginning of my marriage to the Shaykh and I was to be married to him for, I think about 20 years. And I'll tell you more about it. The plot thickens!

Knowledge, knowledge, everywhere!

It was impossible to think any ill of him, for me in particular because I was new. He was telling me all kinds of things that he told the others many years before. He told me innocent little jokes, *very* innocent, but I still remember when I had a question about something, it was amazing because he had a folder on every subject. Whenever I was interested in something he would bring out a book or a folder about it and he would teach me. I've always been very interested in people so he was teaching me one day about physiognomy. He had pictures of statues of great people in history like Caesar with a physiognomist explaining how he could tell what their character was like, just from their faces.

Once at my job I had met a man who dealt with spirits. I told the Shaykh about it and he took out a dossier teaching me all about ghosts and the believing *jinn* (spirits) and the disbelieving jinn, and he told me about a lady in Scandinavia who had a gift for seeing the jinn and she also happened to be a great artist. She had made some paintings of her visions and those had been made into greeting cards, which he had bought decades before and had in a folder. He showed me pictures of jinn! Now I assume that she didn't see jinn with her eyes but that they were psychic beings and she saw them psychically. I asked him actually; but they were such eerie-looking creatures and the good jinn were not disagreeable-looking at all, but they just looked very, very strange to human beings. He told me all about them and taught me about ghosts. He said ghosts really exist; they are psychic residues of people who were very passionate and had died; but parts of their psyche remained attached to the places they lived or to objects that they handled. The phenomenon that happens when one hears a ghost, when one hears a voice or when one feels the wind—this is real, and it's... you know, better not to live in a place with

a ghost! I do not recommend doubting the reality of such things. Nowadays, much information is publicly available, but its tainted with romanticism, drama and decorated lies.

I think he knew almost everything and so did Sayyidah Latifah. The two of them were so well-read and well-educated you can't imagine it. Even for children—although he really didn't like children and he didn't want to have children, and he didn't want his disciples to have children—but he had a wonderful collection of the best children's books in the world; books which were well-illustrated and had lovely stories.

Once he was making love to me, when all of a sudden we heard a tremendous crash! It sounded like a warning; as if we were doing something wrong. He quickly put on a robe and I put on something and we went outside. There was Sayyidah Latifah; and in a room upstairs, a little way from his study was a library, a big room with books from top to bottom. Suddenly one of the enormous bookshelves had just collapsed, and all the books were floating all over the floor. Well, we all helped get everything back together and then he and I went back to our haven. Sayyidah Latifah went back downstairs and he had thought that maybe this was some bad sign or something; but he had the Bible open on his desk, to some line that was very, very profound and meant that everything was all right (!). I don't remember what verse; but now I've grown up, and guess what? You can prove anything you want to by quoting a line in the Bible, the Quran or any book.

I'll always remember that after our appointments we'd go downstairs with dignity. We went into the kitchen and Sayyidah Latifah would make tea and we would sit and have tea with her. I would try to share something that I'd learned with her. Of course, she knew everything much better than I did; so when I would tell her, she would start giving me examples, and we'd have a very interesting conversation in which I learned oodles from both of them. I learned about his past, all about "esoteric interpretations." We talked about every subject in the world back then: It was a rich and heavenly time of life!

Adventures in polygamy

Now once Sayyidah Hamidah knew that I was his wife, the Shaykh and I decided to be very kind to her, so sometimes when I had an appointment with him, we would invite her to come too. The first time we did that, I was terribly embarrassed. They were both completely naked and so was I, as seemed perfectly normal to me. He was sitting on the floor and she was sitting on one thigh. They were invoking together, obviously expecting me to sit on the other side. But I was embarrassed and I did *not* want to sit there. They were patient with me, being very sweet. And after a while I got on and he wrapped one arm around each of us. We were rocking back and forth saying

"Allah, Allah, Allah" and being very pious. But at the same time, we were all three laughing delightfully together. It was something very charming and ever so magnanimous for me. I've always had a kind of mania for magnanimity. I loved including Sayyidah Hamidah in my relationship with the Shaykh; and she seemed to accept me perfectly; she just wanted to be included in his new love, so she loved me like he did. Every once in a while we would have her with us like that. And oh my goodness, I don't know how many women have seen a woman like Sayyidah Hamidah! She was nearing 50 by that time; but when she was in the presence of the Shaykh, she was so much in love, and was so sweet and so feminine, that it was as if the whole room was full of perfume because of her! Her whole face, her whole being was transformed by love. I had no idea a woman could be like that. The Shaykh seemed to think that I was better; but I saw pure femininity in her as long as I knew her. She had a quality that I hadn't known women could have.

There was a poem that Sayyidah Hamidah and I used to say holding hands: يا عيسى بن مريم عليك السلام ان جسمك للغفار لثام وتنزيل الرحمان للناس The meaning of that is "Oh Jesus, son of Mary, upon thee be peace, Truly thy body is a clothing for the All-Forgiving. And a revelation of the All-Merciful for Mankind!" In other words, God forgive me, I was saying that our Shaykh was a manifestation of Jesus Christ and of two of the Divine Names: *Al-Ghaffar* and *Ar-Rahman*. Maybe from the point of view of a disciple, if we had an absolutely true spiritual master that might mean something for us. But he was a false Shaykh who was using the wives of his closest disciples; he was using them for his own pleasure in every way. It wasn't *just* a sexual relationship; it also had to do with femininity; it had to do with our different talents. He used us, he owned us, and took us from our husbands; and, in my case, when... well, I'd better tell you later. And all that happened "in heaven," I had yet to learn about; but I'd like you all to learn with me, as I go through life.

When I had to tell Sidi Abdul Ali that I was really the *Shaykh's* wife and that I couldn't sleep with him anymore, so we could just kiss each other on the cheeks, he looked pained and sad—as if his honor had been violated. I've never forgotten that. He would have, in theory, given anything to the Shaykh; but a Shaykh should not take the only wife of his closest disciple, even with permission, because the disciple can't say "no." The proof of this is the story of David in Islam. In Islam, David is a great Prophet; Solomon and Lot too. His only fault, not sin, was asking Uriah the Hittite to divorce his wife for him; that being a common practice among the Jews then.[30] David repented, because, as King, no one had a choice really, as to whether to accept or not; and Bathsheba was the only, and very precious, wife of David's general, Uriah. In

30 See *A History of the Prophets of Islam*, by Suzanne Haneef.

Islam, several stories are corrected, and seen as having been altered by people who copied the Bible over generations.

In Islam, King David was a prophet and the Psalms are revelation. The sin of David was not what it says in the Bible. From the Muslim point of view, a human being exaggerated the sin of David, thinking he was an ordinary human being; but he had an extraordinarily beautiful soul. His only sin was that he asked Uriah the Hittite to give him his wife. That's why in the Quran there is the saying about the 99 ewes. David already had 99 or 999 concubines, and still wanted the only lamb, the dearest thing that Uriah the Hittite had, which was his beloved wife, Bathsheba. That was a grave fault, and apparently, he didn't even ask Uriah the Hittite; he only thought of it. Due to that, he wept and wept and wept because of his sin; David had a perfect soul, he had the soul of a Prophet and he received revelation. When he recited the Psalms, the animals listened and the plants all came alive. The plants on the mountains woke up when they heard him.

That one time Sayyidah Hamidah was sitting one thigh and I was on the other and we were invoking together all three of us saying "Allah, Allah, Allah," he had his arms around each one of us, so he had one hand on her breast and one hand on my breast. He said in French, *"On ne sait pas a quel saint se vouer."* It was terribly funny because when it's pronounced and not written it means one doesn't know which breast to pay attention to. The meaning in French is "One doesn't know which saint to pray to"; but we were laughing so much because we both knew French perfectly well. Then he was making jokes in different languages which had a completely different meaning in English or French. He was saying in Italian *"il problema di donne"* (The problem of the given things). It's like in a mathematical equation: whatever given by two and two is four, and four and four is eight, so you have to do this and you have to do that—these are the given things in an equation—but when it's pronounced in French it means "the problem of the ladies!" We were all so happy and laughing together over his playing with languages. He was far too charming for words with us women. He was really something—he had lots of charm, humor, personality but mostly spiritual intelligence, genius and charisma. One felt magnetized by God in his presence because he was always saying things that led one back to God. We had *no* idea how angry God would be with the mixing of piety and illicit sexual playing like that. The only problem was Him! There are so many things to love on earth; but many are forbidden. The Next World has better!

Signs, symbols and visions galore!

As soon as I was married to the Shaykh, he told me several signs and symbols, visions and locutions. He told me that the first time he'd seen me

at a majlis, he had recognized me as a woman he had seen in a dream or a dream-vision. He was a child—I hope I get that straight because he made a very famous painting of this afterwards—he dreamt of a beautiful woman, who was naked and who was walking towards him on a path. Beside him was a baby tiger. When he saw this woman, he put his hand on her vagina and he asked her "What is your name?" Her answer was, "Oh, I don't think anymore." He thought that this woman was me, and this was a divine vision. It was about not thinking anymore because one was beyond thought. He thought that in his life, I represented what he dubbed "existential." He had made a painting of that vision already. He showed it to me later, and gave it to me; but I had to sell it once when I was very poor. He didn't tell anyone the details about it, and it looked very innocent: Well (?) innocent, the woman was completely naked; but he was only a child in the picture, and was with a lion cub. That painting was *captivating!*

Then he told me that a few days before we were married he had had a locution: He was walking up from the Qayyumids' garden, towards his house when he heard a voice in his own chest saying (in French) *"She will be yours in the here below and in the hereafter."* It was about me, because he had fallen in love with me; but I didn't realize it completely yet.

He also told me once that many years before he had had a locution in which a voice in his own chest told him in French (I don't know why all his locutions, visions were in French, as actually German was more his mother tongue) but anyway, in French a voice told him: *"The Prophet wants you to have several wives."* So when he married me, all these things made sense, and Sayyidah Hamidah and I were the two Madeleines who had been promised him in the Quran.

PROOF

Chapter 7
People Up There in Heaven

"We have met so many interesting faces in our lives,
but only a few interesting souls!"
Mehmet Murat ildan

The three wives of a genius

We were all intelligent; we were all trying to be good; and we were all submitted to one man, so we thought of the most ingenious things to please him. Sometimes there was so much humor and magnanimity in that polygamy, that I've never gotten over it. If I ever saw everyone again in the next world, I could forgive them all for anything, remembering some of the things that happened.

He and Latifeli[31] spoke Swiss-German together; but that crept into the vocabularies of Hamideli and me too, whereas the two ex-husbands were excluded from this. Us wives all called him Sheikheli, which means "dear little Shaykh," while he called us: Latifeli, Hamideli and Amineli. His cat had been named "Tigerli," dear little tiger; and I was yet to have one named Pumeli, dear little Puma, because he had no stripes like tigers.

One day I went upstairs for one of my many appointments, and the Shaykh greeted me as usual. I kissed his hand, and then he opened his arms wide, and drew me close to him. Then he held me back a little way, and had a look at me, saying: "As-salaamu alaikum, Latifeli... No—Hamideli! Oh, what is *your* name?" I just laughed and laughed so much. I could forget everything

31 Only he and us wives used pet names with Swiss-German dialect endings.

if I just saw him in the next world, and he started calling me by the names of those other wives and asked me "Who are *you*?" He had so much innocent humor that I could make a whole chapter out of the innocent jokes he told. He never did or said anything that had the slightest whiff of modernism or profanity about it either. He was just—although one doesn't like to say it about men—adorable. And when he loved someone, when you were his favorite, his love was so overwhelming that there was no way that you could not love him back. I hadn't been in love; but I soon came to love him. He was irresistible; but I loved the other wives too (much more than he did after I came) and I always tried to include them.

I haven't forgotten the times we shared together. I found them all to have some terrible character traits in the end; but I'd love to have one all-embracing hug with them all and then go and marry some other Muslim Gnostic, or someone like Numa Pompilius or Sitting Bull. He's the one I used to think of, because he had several wives, and I really do love polygamy. In fact, I can hardly imagine being totally happy without at least one sister-wife! Strange, isn't it?

An angel in heaven

We all knew that Sidi Ibrahim (Titus Burckhardt) was a saint. He wrote *Fez: The City of Islam*, among many other great books. Strange is destiny: I lived in Fez, aged 80. When I met him, I was 26, and he died decades ago; but he'll ever be one of the fixed stars in the heaven of my life. He was the kind of person who was so profound, and who showed such goodness with every move, that one couldn't imagine his being anywhere *other than* in heaven.

Well, one day we all learned that he was going to leave us and live in Morocco, so we had a special evening in his honor. After supper, we were all sitting around a straw mat on the floor, as usual, and several people were asking him questions about Islamic art, metaphysics and the symbolism of forms—because he was a gnostic and quite an erudite scholar too.

All that interested me was that he was a saint; but of course I didn't want to embarrass him by asking him if he was one or not. Still, there was some common knowledge among us, about rather miraculous things, even in his daily life.

One thing interested me especially: He had several cats, and when it was raining outside, they'd come in with wet paws; but when he'd get a towel to dry them off, they would all see him, and start licking their paws for him.

So after some of these intellectual questions had been answered, I asked mine: "Please, Sidi Ibrahim, would you tell us about how your cats come in from the rain? We know they wash their own paws when they see you holding a towel." He looked at me and burst out laughing: "What a story!" he said.

Once Sidi Abdul Ali and I were having lunch with him and Seyyed Hossein Nasr in a restaurant. I offered him more of some dish he seemed to like; but he, gently as always, refused; and I think he said something like he had had enough of fine things for that day. Then I piped up with, "Well then, have some for tomorrow!" He gave me *some* look! It was a grave reproach for my extravagant, indulgent way of thinking; but he didn't say a single word—giving me only a passing glance of pity, because I was so unaware of my worldly attitude. Forty years later, I'd not dream of saying anything like that again! It may seem like nothing to you, if you're too used to such ideas; but really what I said was against every Holy Book in the world. One does not store up for "the morrow."

My most dear friend, Latifeli, the aristocrat

One day, I guess the Shaykh had "an appointment" with Sayyidah Hamidah or something; so Sayyidah Latifah and I took a train and went on a trip. I hadn't been in the picture—as a wife anyway—for long, but we were best friends (so were Sayyidah Hamidah and I; but I was best friends with each one in a different way). We wanted to know one another better, so she took me on a long train ride to see her ancestral home.

Now Sayyidah Latifah was *not* much of a confiding, or "linking" type; but I am; however, she had been suffering from constant squabbles with Sayyidah Hamidah for eight years when I came along, so she had practically delivered me into the Shaykh's arms—maybe thinking I'd make peace in the family, or out of sheer desperation. I don't know; anyway, we all recognized that Sayyidah Hamidah had a really difficult character, whereas Sayyidah Latifah was a virtuous and supremely reasonable woman. Maybe she was a bit *too* reasonable, or not quite feminine enough: That was part of the reason she remained a virgin her whole life. She adored the Shaykh though, and aside from a folly "in her youth," she was a marvelous wife, lifelong.

Well, we talked a blue streak, and I loved her to death, while learning all the time, as she was a mine of knowledge, and she was astonishingly, *not* what my father would have called "a stuffed shirt." Although she was from a wealthy, aristocratic family, and the daughter of an Ambassador—who had lived in several countries so she spoke many languages—she also had originality, imagination, humor, and, in a pinch, she could be about anything. That's a rarity you know: Nearly everyone has limits. She sure didn't seem to have any in those days.

After hours in a train, we reached an estate: A big, but not pretentious looking mansion. Around it were limitless fields of well-mown grass, replete with undulating mounds, so it wasn't at all stiff or boring. Every once in a while, there would be an area replete with trees, plants and flowers. But the

trees were all special: There was every variety of Japanese maple on that land! My father, *and* Sidi Abdul Ali, would have been in ecstasy to see those trees collected by her grandfather. My father loved plants; and my husband loved Japan! He'd have bowed respectfully before a Japanese stick!

She told me how intelligent and original her grandmother had been. Once that old grandmother went sliding—laughing the whole way—down a hill with her granddaughter in an old-fashioned wagon. At the bottom, they fell over, laughing together. Sayyidah Latifah had never forgotten that, and see: Neither have I! That day I shared being brought up in a truly aristocratic and also a passionately interesting family.

My dearest friend, Hamideli, the tender-hearted poet

Hamideli was totally different: An impossible woman, who could write anyone off on the spur of the moment. Her own character was so bad, that she quite easily thought the worst of anyone. That was far from all: She had about every fault; but she was educated, cultivated, disciplined, and above all, *loving and poetic;* and she had always been quite rich! She was a bouquet in herself alone; but with lots of thistles to break any possible monotony. When she was with the Shaykh, she was like a bouquet of flowers and an opened bottle of perfume. She was unsurpassably loving. Actually, the devotion of both those new friends of mine, seemed to be proofs of his sublime station.

The Comtesse de Saint-Point

Living around a genius was so fascinating, that one's intelligence felt expanded and blessed. However, not only was Frithjof Schuon a great genius, but practically every disciple was too—each in his way. That led to our hearing instructive stories.

Now some of the Shaykh's disciples were knighted by the Queen of England, or they were ambassadors in various counties; but one was an exceedingly worldly countess, who lived in Egypt, when Sidi Abu Bakr (Martin Lings) met her there. Alas, her house was chock full of mementos, on every wall—pictures of herself, naked, with wide hats, bearing peacock feathers and the like. Her spiritual life seemed blocked by those walls full of extravagant memories; but Sidi Abu Bakr was no fool, and he was no novice as concerned the spiritual life.

With a plan, he went to the house of the Countess, bearing gifts: Beautifully calligraphed Arabic verses from the Quran, praising God in several ways. He knew that there would be havoc: Her decorations could not subsist in the presence of these revealed words. Delighted, she held them to her chest, thanking him wholeheartedly.

Some weeks later, he saw her at a majlis, and pretended to off-handedly be mentioning those marvels he'd taken her. "Have you found places for them yet?"

She confessed, "Indeed, yes, but as soon as I had them up, I found myself living in a war zone. I had to take them down!"

A psychic looks into her crystal ball (really)!

Much had happened before I arrived in Switzerland, and as the newest comer, I was to hear all about the history of the Tariqah. One of the things that had happened was that a disgruntled faqir had left the Tariqah and gone to a psychic, who looked in her crystal ball. She saw that the Tariqah would come to an end, because the apartment of Frithjof Schuon was totally empty. The Shaykh used to tell us about this with glee. He said: "She was right. I had moved into this house."

The cab driver

Once I was in a cab, on my way to an osteopath, because x-rays had shown that I needed six to twelve months of therapy: My backbone had a serious fault! The driver started chatting: Why was I going there? Well, I usually confide in people, so I told him all about it. Then he told me about quite a strange man he knew: An enormous man, the size of three, who could *see* bones through flesh; and that man was an unlicensed "chiropractor." Those were unheard of back then; but I liked that taxi driver and trusted him.

Soon I was waiting at the end of an endless line, leading up to the door of the mysterious man. When I got in (Ay! He looked like Goliath) he picked me up as if I were a matchstick, and quickly moved all my parts around. At the end, he told me to have more x-rays. I told my doctor, got the x-rays which showed nothing anymore, and... I've had very little trouble since. Once in a blue moon, if my back gets cold, I need two paracetamols. That's it! The man was very nice too. It's just that most people don't believe in our Lord, or in anyone else either!

The jovial psychic and his oak tree

Switzerland is famous for being full of psychic healers, acupuncturists, homeopaths... and frauds. The reason, back then anyway, was that some neighboring countries forbade all but the staid and stolid means of healing, so many healers went over the borders from their countries into Switzerland.

In case you haven't figured that out yet, I have endless curiosity, so guess? I explored. And I found a lot of fakes. Finally, I met a jovial healer, who could

read auras and diagnose fantastically well. That was Georges Lambelet, of Lausanne. Since we were both friendly, he taught me about his gift, which runs in his family, but only *every other* generation. He showed me his three-year-old granddaughter, and said that *she* had his gift, but his children did not.

He was impeccable for diagnosis. If you don't believe in this kind of thing, just test someone like him! He was nice too, and he warned me severely about the frauds. Actually, my visiting and being so curious, had been dangerous. I had not had any idea *how* dangerous; but praise the Lord, I was protected.

I told the Shaykh about him, and he said he was obviously a gifted healer. Then, once, when the Shaykh had an ailment and didn't want to see a doctor, he gave me a photograph to show my new friend. (Strangely enough, the aura shows on photos, and it's accurate as long as one isn't touching another person or an animal). Monsieur Lambelet took one look at the Shaykh's picture, and looked so serious that I was scared. Normally, he was a jolly man; but he became severe to end all, and lost in thought. I regretted having brought that picture and thought he saw the greatness of the Shaykh. At that time, I didn't realize that someone with a psychic gift can't see the spirit. Not being able to stand that anymore, I asked, *"Qu'est ce qu'il y a?"* (What's the matter)? He said, *"Il est très dur!"* (He is very harsh, hard). I thought he saw the strength of his resistance towards the modern world.

Knowing him was really interesting; but one detail remains like a flower: His gift would fade away, unless he went into a forest of oak trees every weekend. He had to stand with his back against the trunk of an oak tree; and he had to put the palms of his hands on it. Otherwise his strength left him. Decades later, I met another, honest and good, psychic healer, three thousand miles away. In passing, she mentioned that she gains strength by walking counter clockwise around—guess what? An oak tree! Nature—even inanimate-seeming trees—has mysterious forces for our benefit. Praise the Lord!

Funny things happened up there, when I was up in a heaven on earth!

In general, the Shaykh presented himself as quite a majestic king; but in his family, he was different much of the time. One day, I went upstairs into his study, and there he was, sitting on the floor, with little stacks of paper all around him – obviously looking for something. Seeing a question on my face, he explained. "This is my letter to so-and-so, and here are the copies for the fuqara; these are for Sidi so-and-so, and the others are for the dignitaries; but where is the original? I *am the Shaykh*, and I should have *the original!"* Then (the only time I ever saw that indescribably sheepishly humble look on his face) he said, "*Oh*, I mailed it to the one I wrote it to!"

If he hadn't had so many qualities, one would have seen great errors at every turn; but he was a delight to be around, and had an unexpected way of making fun of pretentious religious ideas. He was also perspicacious in understanding the differences between the peoples of different countries and languages.

As for children, he did not like them, and didn't want them around; but he had a fine sense of the childlike, and when he told a story about a child, funny or not, it was impossible to imitate him: That's why there's nothing to add of childlike stories he told.

The Shaykh also said some things that were too "percutant;" but I cannot remember or repeat them. One I loved was in Italian, re-built by him in French. Here's something resembling his French Magnum Opus, by me:

Those who can, won't, and
Those who will, can't.
Those who do, don't know how,
And those who know how, are busy;
And that's why the world is going to rack and to ruin!

The freshest wit

Whitall Perry (Sidi Abdul Qayyum) was a man of such wit, that tensions could not mount too high with his fresh and brilliant sense of humor around. He's the one who wrote the great book: *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* and several other brilliant books.

One evening, we were all at our house: Frithjof Schuon (the Shaykh), Catherine Schuon, the Perrys, my husband and me. As usual, we were all sitting around a straw mat on the floor; with the Shaykh's being always higher up on a lowish sort of divan. He was always higher than anyone else, and both his dignity and his majesty were ever apparent. He was decidedly a great man: He and we all recognized that. (All us women present, were his too, which included Whitall Perry's ex-wife. It's funny: we were all quite conscious of that)!

For some reason, someone mentioned that a certain faqir had been the one who swept the floors in a *zawiyah*; but then he became the Shaykh himself. Sidi Abdul Qayyum said, "Now this is beginning to interest me: Is that how one becomes a Shaykh?

Laughing in a house of mirrors

Once Thomas Yellowtail, a Crow Indian Chief, and his wife Suzie, came to visit in Switzerland. There, our family was only three wives and two

ex-husbands. Now my two sister-wives were great metaphysicians, as were the two ex-husbands—Whitall Perry and John Murray—not to mention the Shaykh.

We all took the Yellowtails up a high mountain, in a mountain train, which works on totally different principles than the usual trains: They sort of hop up stairs.

On the way up, we saw the most gorgeous mountain goats, like deer and antelopes, jumping gracefully between hazardous cliffs. Yellowtail was wearing Indian clothes and a full war bonnet, so I was rather hard put to it to explain my being there later: On top of the mountain, we bumped right into a man from my office!

After they'd seen the fine views, we all took the Yellowtails to a "house of mirrors," and I think it was called "The Alhambra." Well, all the many walls in that house, were mirrors! I would see Sayyidah Latifah, and approach her; but she was an illusion! Then I found her somewhere: She raised her arms, and I saw a dozen of her, looking like statues of the many-armed Shiva.

The whole time, those metaphysicians were laughing at each others' remarks, and about what we saw and couldn't see! As often, I had little idea what it was about, but it was one of the most delightful days in my life! Later, in the US, when my fourth sister-wife came, she was no metaphysician either, but in Switzerland I was the amazed one! This is Greek to me; but the Shaykh said that the two of us had "existential" intelligence. Not at all due to any psychological complex—as far as I was concerned, everyone was better than I was. So I just loved them all and toed the line.

No more moon in the water

I loved many people who were really already in Heaven, due to the books in Sidi Abdul Ali's study. He knew exactly where there were biographies and passages in books I'd understand, so he handed me several lives of Shankara Charya: a five-volume life of Honen, the Buddhist saint; books about the Maharshi; about Shemeel; and a passage in the Upanishads: A realized man, Yajnavalkia, was retiring into the forest, leaving his wife, Maitreyi. He explains the Self (the Presence of God in us) to her, before he leaves. Forty years later, I half understand it!

Well, I chose one story to tell you: A Buddhist nun, had tried for ages to attain spiritual realization—all to no avail. She was of a simple background, and I felt like her, because everyone around me seemed to be a genius or a saint; and they were all of the élite among intellectuals. I came across this:[32]

32 Version, by Stephen Damon.

"When the nun, Chiyono, studied Zen under Bukko of Engaku she was unable to attain the fruits of meditation for a long time. At last one moonlit night she was carrying water in an old pail bound with bamboo. The bamboo broke and the bottom fell out of the pail, and at that moment Chiyono was set free! In commemoration, she wrote a poem:

In this way and that I tried to save the old pail
Since the bamboo strip was weakening and about to break
Until at last the bottom fell out.
Nor more water in the pail!
No more moon in the water!"

I'll never forgot Chiyono; but the idea of sudden realization "came back home" when I was 80 years old! There is hope for people not born with genius!

PROOF

Chapter 8
Thistles in a Heavenly Garden

"But he's nice," Barby objected. Tom Bishop smiled without humor. "Most pleasant and interesting man I ever knew was a burglar."

John Blaine, The Phantom Shark

Come and see my garden; but beware of its thistles!

I'm going to show *you* the thistles in my heavenly garden; but I didn't see them myself for decades. Granted, I was blind; and I do not claim to be any genius; but young thistles are small and hard to see. They grow up and choke out your flowering plants. That takes time; and it took me decades to notice them, so I want to give you, my heirs, a lot of obvious hints about where those thistles are—before you too become old.

In heaven, I met the most marvellous people I'd ever dreamt of: Pure, intelligent, and good as gold. From time to time, I saw that not all things were what they *seemed:* Skim milk often masked as *cream.*

One thistle was "sacred nudity:" It was a fine esoteric idea, depending upon what God said, but nevermind even Him for the moment; just be logical, then essential. The Shaykh introduced nudity, and he added some women (like me), as if they were sacred symbols in his life... and he, himself (look here's a thistle) was a child with those women. There was only one problem, oh my friends: He always ended up making love to those women—*even* (I wish I didn't have to say it) with the Blessed Virgin! Not everyone knew that; but at least three of us wives did. Strange: Maryam had adopted him as her "little child," he wrote;

and yet he painted her as a grown, naked woman. Right beside her thigh, he painted himself, as a magnificent-looking *man*, with an imposing chest.[33]

Do you remember his first love? Her name was Madeleine Oesch, and she did not love him or want to marry him. Her brother kept by her side and refused threats of divine retribution coming from Martin Lings. Here are some extracts from letters the Shaykh himself wrote about his first true love:

> "As soon as the good cause will have triumphed, that is, as soon as Miss Oesch will have been delivered from the hold of the darkness that clasps her as a thick net, special truths will be revealed to the order [Tariqah] and access to superior states of being will be facilitated for the fuqara."
>
> "I carry the very possibility of Madeleine in my spirit; that's my right over her."
>
> "In our domain, there is no one who is more spirit than I am. Consequently, nothing can be more desirable for Madeleine than to give her life into my hands."
>
> ". . . the fact that man can exert violence over woman, and that woman cannot exert violence over man has a profound meaning and is a sufficient indication of our sacred right to war."
>
> "Do not say anymore that Madeleine does not love me or loves me too little. The fact that man has power over woman and not inversely is the best indication that the right of man to love is greater; and that the young girl's feelings are less important––feelings to which the Orient gives, for that reason, very little importance."
>
> "As you know, I am only Muslim as an initiate, and this point of view surpasses that of the Church; so, for the Church my capacity as Sufi does not exist. Consequently, my capacity as Muslim in particular does not exist for the Church. It would be a lie to argue on a religious plane the esoteric point of view regarding the Church, and since I am Catholic from the point of view of the Church, Madeleine's marriage with me would not be a mixed marriage, but on the contrary a Catholic marriage, to which I am fully entitled as a Catholic. As I have said, the Sufi tradition belongs to a wholly different level of realization, because it is higher, so it cannot go against the Church's orders, just as the privileges of Christ could not contradict the Judaic law."

Gobbledygook, no? And there are two other major thistles, well-known worldwide, and yet to grow: The two great men, those who were to become the Shaykh-successors of Frithjof Schuon after he died: The Englishman, Martin Lings, and the Persian Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Now I already told you about my

33 Many of his paintings, photographs of him and articles against him, nearly always exceedingly exaggerated, are available online; and some of his paintings are magnificent. The painting I just mentioned is online. See Appendix VII: Corroborating Evidence.

marvelous professor; and while maintaining that he is very fine and spiritually brilliant (most often wise too), I am warning everyone not to follow him as a spiritual master—for all else, yes! He has defended Frithjof Schuon, and blamed everything he did on the Bloomingtonians, or us womenfolk. No: Everyone is responsible for what he, himself does, and I know that Frithjof Schuon had the same, total lack of morality when we lived in Switzerland. The love, which was really idolatry, of the fourth "wife" encouraged him to manifest publicly, in Bloomington, what had been kept in "the family" in Switzerland. Very sadly, Dr. Nasr also manifested some of the same character faults that his master had; but that was only in his old age, and quite mild in comparison. May God have mercy upon a marvelous teacher and writer, who has practically saved the lives of many!

As concerns Martin Lings, and *all* people who do not recognize the heresy of Schuon, it is impossible to accept their orthodoxy *in spite* of appearances. Martin Lings (known in Islam as Shaykh Abu Bakr Siraj ud-Din) believed in and defended his master, lifelong. He shared a host of absolutely false ideas, with everyone who didn't recognize the abundant horrors. Besides, to mention a detail: Both Nasr and Lings derive their supposed authority from a false Shaykh! Some of you learned people are not going to believe me easily, so here is a sentence from a letter, written by Martin Lings to Victor Danner (Westerham, October 19th, 1986) and not recanted one bit:

> "For you, the Shaykh, 'has no sense of morality at all;' for us (Martin Lings and Titus Burckhardt) he is no less than the mouthpiece of Heaven in respect of morality for the present age."

Martin Lings knew the Shaykh at the time he was in love with Madeleine; he himself threatened her brother with divine retribution for interfering in a marriage Madeleine did not want; he was present at Indian Days, where the young faqirat were bare-breasted. He saw Sayyidah Badriyyah dance naked; and he was in Bloomington, conscious of everything, when the Shaykh was encouraging a couple to let their 15-year-old daughter see a married man alone. Of course, that girl was soon no longer a virgin. The man, who was the governing Na'ib then, was divorced by his wife... and he caused a scandal. All that happened because the Shaykh saw such spiritual talent in his Na'ib that he told the girl's parents to let her see him, as they were in love and the faqir was an extraordinary person. I know because I was the one assigned to encourage the parents, and I told Lings about it. One day, a faqir, Also Vidali, had an appointment with the Shaykh, when in walked that young girl, stark naked! The examples of outrageous morality, online are endless (and sometimes not true) and really, the Shaykh *did* have "no sense of morality at all!"

The most insane thing I've ever heard about him and morality, only came to the surface recently. A group of Christian disciples were well-informed (by

Catherine Schuon, my first sister-wife). She taught them that he was "very critical of the morals of the Bible and the Quran. He called those teachings 'Semitic moralism!'" That is such an insolent and outrageous blasphemy, that it alone suffices! That's no little thistle: It was once; but it sure grew up to choke out the entire garden! And may I be forgiven if God is not pleased with the analogy: All that comes to mind is to say that Frithjof Schuon tried to choke out the garden of all revelations—all that God revealed to guide mankind back to Him. That so-called Shaykh really did put himself above God in the end. I only saw growing thistles in my heavenly garden. Decades later that's what happened.

That man was *so genial* in every way, that he could teach exactly what he did not know. And he could describe his own inner state, as being that of another person, far gone astray![34] How could anyone get away from his group and from his influence? I do not think that was or is yet, possible without either a miracle, or submitting to "True Tradition." I mean submitting to the Words of God in revelation, to the ways of His Messengers, and to His revealed, sacred Law. The devil is far too tricky; but Allah, His Prophets and all the greatest spiritual masters knew that; and they warned us—telling us precisely what is the straight path back to Him, and what to look out for on the wrong paths. Now you look at Appendix VIII: Quotations From The Masters of Tasawwuf.

In the Quran, God Himself speaks and He says some things I will quote for you. First, let me explain to Christians that Jesus Christ is in the Quran, with His miracles, His miraculous birth, His mother Mary and many of His closest "companions." Jesus is called the "Word and the Spirit" of God in the Quran, by God, Himself. No Muslim can deny the holiness of Jesus, because He is in the Quran, which also says to follow the Prophet Muhammad.

So here are some quotes from the Quran:

> "Let the people of the Injil (Gospels) judge by what Allah has revealed therein. And whosoever does not judge by what God has revealed, such are the rebellious."
>
> "Undoubtedly, We have sent down Taurah, wherein is the guidance and light. According to it the Jews were ordered by Our obedient prophets and men of learning and jurists for it was desired from them to preserve the Book of Allah and they were witnesses to it, then fear not people, but fear Me and do not accept a mean price for Our Signs. And whoso judges not according to what Allah has sent down, they are the persons who are infidels!
>
> "And whoso judges not according to what Allah has sent down, then they are the persons unjust."

34 See Appendix III: A Quote From a Letter Written by Frithjof Schuon, in 1953.

So why did intelligent and good men defend him? I'd say they had no idea how bad it would get; *and* they got locked into a system. First they were obedient towards someone they saw as superior; but then that superior person made *himself* the Criterion of truth. In Islam—well, in every true religion—God's Word is the Criterion of truth, and the Quran, which is word-for-word revealed, is called "The Criterion," by God Himself.

For over 50 years, Martin Lings knew the Shaykh. He and his wife, Sayyidah Rabiah spent a month every year in Switzerland, then a month yearly in Bloomington. We all knew him well, and he knew us, with all the scandals too. For those he had an alternate explanation: The one of Frithjof Schuon! Now it's a very unfortunate fact, that even good people can be taken into false systems with no exit. Sidi Abu Bakr (Martin Lings) was a fine person, orthodox in many ways; but his method was not.[35] Sidi Ibrahim (Titus Burckhardt) was the most saintly person I knew in the Tariqah; but he was a fool as regarded his master, and he perpetuated trouble. How? He wrote a text, which kept us all from criticizing the Shaykh. On moral grounds, he wrote, no disciple can judge his Shaykh. Now in ordinary circumstances, one can imagine what he meant; but most of us were morally superior to a false master. Sidi Ibrahim made us stop thinking, and stop using the moral criteria of revelation.

In spite of knowing and following Islam himself, Martin Lings hadn't a clue as to how far off the beaten track was his own master—nor did Titus Burckhardt, who Martin Lings places by his side as he writes to the great scholar, Victor Danner (Sidi Abd al-Jabbar).[36] Victor Danner was the only governing Na'ib in the Tariqah, situated in Bloomington, Indiana, until the Shaykh removed him just before we all migrated there. Subsequently, he left the Tariqah.

The great men in the Tariqah, who stayed with the Shaykh, knew why one should follow the Shariah and did so. Why in the world they didn't mind his flouting the Quran, the Sunnah and the Shariah is Greek to me. A hadith says, "All my followers will go to Paradise except those who refuse." When asked who those people were, Muhammad said, "Those who refuse to follow my Sunnah." I had hardly any idea what that Sunnah was; but those men did. They were not there when he told me and Hamideli that the fuqara should follow *his* Sunnah, and not the Prophet's (which didn't apply to our times, he added—contradicting God Himself); but we all knew he loved breaking the Decrees of God—hardly respecting a one! Why when I saw him the last time,

35 He taught the six Themes of Meditation, supposedly "revealed" to a false master. Those themes were extremely interesting; but practicing them places the one who does it in one of the varieties of idolatry. That is defined as obeying someone who allows what God has forbidden.

36 Martin Lings' full letter is in Appendix IV; and in the P.S. is a lot of nonsense trying to justify the morality of a man who invented his own moral system, instead of following God's. But God said, "The truth is, and the Truth I speak." God also said, "I decree what pleased Me."

he was making statues of the Virgin Mary—naked of course, with his fourth "wife," who was naked too!

In spite of what Martin Lings says in his letter to Victor Danner, he did not know half as much as I did about the private life of his spiritual master. He also, so very unfortunately, cites proofs of his greatness—phenomena which were precisely what hid the fact that there were "thistles" right and left. He cites the books; but a man's *life* is his commentary on the ideas written. The immoral *life* of Frithjof Schuon proved that one should stay away from his books. The *method* (including the six themes), which seemed holy (a hidden thistle) was "revealed" to a man who had dreams and who heard voices, always saying exactly what he wanted; and they all made *him* look great, not God or His Prophets and saints. For me, the last straw in that letter from Martin Lings, was his citing the "civilisation" that we all lived in. The beauty of our way of life was one of the devil's greatest ways of hiding all that was askew. Now Martin Lings (and I'd say much more so Titus Burckhardt) was an intelligent, good and exceedingly pious person. Never did I meet anyone in that false Tariqah, more saintly than Titus Burckhardt; but both men were fooled royally: May they be forgiven for leading others astray.

The taming of the shrew

Shakespeare wrote a play, called The Taming of the Shrew, about an incorrigibly sassy and overbearing young lady, whose father couldn't do a thing with her. Well, he couldn't, *until* he got a brilliant idea and married her to a man more overbearing than she was. When the new couple returned to visit him, his daughter had been tamed, and her husband was so in control of her that she was accepting whatever he said. When the sun came up, he called it the moon, so she did too; and moreover, she insisted that the sun was the moon and the moon was the sun. Shakespeare was no fool, and he knew what a domineering personality can do.

Well, once the Shaykh saw a beautiful young (married) woman, sitting in a group of others as he was walking out of a majlis. He looked at her with tremendous romantic love; and she returned his adoring look. In fact he was in love with that young woman, and she'd soon be divorcing her husband and "marrying" him: All us wives knew that. She was Sayyidah Badriyyah, who would become his fourth wife. This happened after we all moved to Bloomington; but I'm telling you now because the incident illustrates the problems that the successors had. Well, so far, so good; but a faqirah saw that exchange of loving looks, and was quite upset—having been assured that her spiritual master was not interested in women, and had only a pure marriage with Sayyidah Latifah. So after the majlis, she told Sayyidah Latifah how troubled she

was. "You could not have seen that. Your eyes have deceived you," answered Sayyidah Latifah. She said, "No, I saw it with my own two eyes."

Well later I was there, when the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah were angry: The faqirah should believe the Shaykh, *not* her eyes! That faqirah left the Tariqah. As for me, you know I stored it behind in my mind. It simmered there for decades; then dear Shakespeare's play came to mind: I realized that Frithjof Schuon made *himself* the *Criterion* of truth—not God, not one's own eyes either! Alack and alas, Sidi Abu Bakr (Martin Lings), Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Titus Burckhardt and other fine men fell into the trap. No one but myself realizes that he also said, in private, that the fuqara should follow *his* Sunnah: [37]That makes the picture crystal clear. It's God and His Prophet who decreed the norms of morality until the end of the world. *And those norms are practically identical to those in the other monotheistic revelations.*

There's no better conman than a genius!

Once the Shaykh, Latifeli and the Qayyumids went to Morocco. My "husband" and I stayed home. Although I worked hard, hours away, and took care of my household, I was given the key to the Shaykh's house, so I could visit his study upstairs, pray in his ineffably beautiful little khalwah, and have the spirit of his home, in my little bits of "spare" time.

I think I was there the day they returned, or soon thereafter, and he was telling me all about a young lady there who was in love with him; they had said the familiar *tu* and *toi* to one another in French, and he thought she would be his fourth wife. He made it quite clear that he loved her; but he asked me if such a young woman (about 20) could be attracted to a man his age (about 70). I said "Of course," sincerely, because he was such an exceptional person. He looked like, and gave the impression of being a Prophet. Any woman could fall in love with him.

Well, soon thereafter, I was at home with my "husband," Sidi Abdul Ali, when Latifeli arrived! She said, "Pack a little suitcase and be ready to go in an hour; you and I are taking Sheikheli to such and such a mountain for a few days, as he's been upset, and is suffering terribly from asthma." I never bothered asking questions, and got ready on the double.

The next thing I knew, we were all three in a hotel suite, with a living room, one bedroom, and an amazingly marvelous view. Right away, she told me that I was to have an "appointment" with him in the bedroom—meaning she'd be in the living room, right on the other side of the door! I was quite on edge, not wanting to hurt her feelings, as he made love to me, not her, and she was my dearest friend too.

37 This could be right in the case of a true master; but they *used* sacred ideas to mask his passions.

Well, in I went, keeping my voice down, and feeling nervous, while he told me what was upsetting him: A letter had come from Morocco, blaming him, because he had hugged that charming young lady, who had told her *Moroccan* (!) husband that he had hugged her and said some embarrassing things. Now Moroccans are born-Muslims, who moreover know the Sunnah: Those men do *not* donate their wives to their Shaykhs, as had two American husbands.

Now that young Moroccan wife was not just anyone: she was Murayyim (Catherine Perry), the daughter of the Qayyumids, the little girl I met at their house, when she was 12 and I was 26. Her story is long and dramatic; but I can't tell you her whole story at once.

Well, we were "playing" affectionately, and he was feeling better. Then his eyes fell on his shoes, which were empty of course—just sitting on the floor there. Embracing me, and looking at those shoes, he said, "*Ils n'ont qu'à souffler dans mes souliers!*" (Oh, they can just go blow in my shoes!) I started laughing loudly, and I have a woefully raucous laugh. Then that made *him* laugh. I had been trying my best not to make any noise; but then we heard Latifeli laughing on the other side of the door! I was *appalled* and worried about what else she'd heard. Then, with our usual pretended composure, we left my "appointment" to go out and have tea with her. Latifeli, ever the perfect hostess and wife, had the table all set and we sat down, as if we'd come downstairs in their house.

I asked her, "Why were you laughing?"

"I was too happy to hear *him* laughing, after he'd been so upset," she said. "And why were *you two* laughing?"

"Oh Latifeli: I'd never heard this before: He said, 'Oh, they can just go blow in my shoes!'" Then we all three laughed together!

I've never forgotten the delightful magnanimity of that moment, *or* of the whole trip, *or* of how rich in qualities were my precious Latifeli, and our great husband, Sheikheli! Now I was very immature inside myself, for decades; I was bedazzled and overlooked everyone's faults, because I really was living in a heaven on earth. *All* my new friends and relatives were chock full of virtues, talents and intelligence. They were aristocrats too—born and/or brought up wealthy, or as noblemen, or, in the case of Sidi Abdul Ali, intrinsically noble.

Long after that day in the mountains, I realized that Murayyim had said she had been embraced "with passion," whereas he was saying it was a simple affectionate hugging of a longtime friend, when he'd been suffering from asthma—so he had just been glad to see a feminine friend, who had lived next door from childhood.

Murayyim would not change her report, and he would not change his. Well I've known people who were proud, worldly and/or crazy; but there are a lot of people who will *never* lie; she is one; and she had no reason to lie: He was still her Shaykh; her whole family was in the Tariqah; but come what may, she would not lie!

I know exactly how the Shaykh hugged women; and I know exactly what it is like to give up your whole life, rather than lie. Not that anything could be much worse; he also allowed Hamideli to tell her (married) daughter that she could lie in bed with the Shaykh the way Abishag the Shunnamite did with David, to keep him warm in his old age.

This is a complicated story, and I could be fried for an oyster. Although I've heard it ten times, I have to tell you with the memory of old age. Still: I stand for justice and truth. I won't let that young lady be blamed forever more if I can help it: Frithjof Schuon was a self-deluded womanizer, defended by too many other deluded folks. It took me decades to realize that, so I want to help those who come after me.[38]

Latifeli, who had been more than a mother to that young woman, eventually called her evil, lied to her... and I'm so sorry to tell you all: This story is one of maybe fifty, and one of a dozen awful incidents, only in the life of that one woman. There was a reason for all of Latifeli's lies, and for her judgements as to who was evil or not. You see, the Criterion of truth was the Shaykh, *not* the Quran. Whoever damaged the reputation of the Shaykh was evil; and therefore one should lie due to a higher good. As long as the lie was to protect him, it was in the interest of what she (and many) considered "a higher, esoteric truth." Later, Latifeli would suffer from the lying of Badriyyeli, for fifteen years. She told me that herself, and I was sympathetic at first. Then I remembered all the lies of Latifeli: She reaped what she had sown. I still hope they were all purified: They're all in the Hands of the Lord. We are supposed to condemn what's false and bad. As for the *people,* it's up to God to sort them out.

When I moved away, I still loved everyone, and was praying my heart out to remain a disciple and friends with all of them. My legal husband told me he'd always love me, no matter what; but my precious friend, Latifeli, begged him not to marry me again behind my back; but I'll come to this later. Here, the thistles are just beginning to show up in the bouquet of my friends in "heaven."

Now there's an unexpected moral in this, for you to ponder upon. I've thought this, and many of you tell me: Keep the marvelous things he's said and written; just reject the rest. I've tried that, especially with little human things like the shoes story, above. I *want* to share it as a precious thing—showing how innocent was his idea of revenge: "Oh, they can just go blow in my shoes!" But my heart has a deep conflict in it: He made *himself* and *many*, believe that he was as innocent as a child, and he created that illusion of his own goodness, by using the gifts God gave him. That story, with his charming, innocent-seeming, personality, made him sound harmless; but when he got angry,

38 Only today, I remember: He had been telling me for months that he could only love me, that I was his perfect wife and shakti, that he'd never take another wife! He told me later that he had thought Murayyim would be the fourth wife!

or even imagined a slight, he became mean and vengeful. And with a letter, sent around the world to the Muqaddams in every country, he could destroy a person's life in the Tariqah. He did that many times! One *could* start life over *outside* the Tariqah: Sure. But sometimes all one's friends, relatives, possessions and livelihood were inextricably woven in there.

He was a multi-faceted genius: And that genius sure included personality, humor and some kinds of love. It wasn't obvious; but he had no loyalty at all. When I arrived, he told me the most awful things about Latifeli and Hamideli. I knew that wasn't noble; but I thought the ignobility was an illusion in his case. That can happen: A disciple may see an insignificant thing and underestimate a person far superior to himself.

When my fourth sister-wife came, he only talked about her to me, for five years. Since I loved her too, I wasn't at all jealous; but I got bored to death; and thought I wasn't married to him anymore. I still didn't dare think he wasn't noble; but he also mostly made love to her in front of me, when I was there too.[39]

We were all too esoteric for words; but once the public was told by him on TV (I watched him film it) that he was not capable of passion, and one could read his books to see that that was true; but it sure was *not* true: He was quite a sexual man, who also pretended to practice Tantrism. Well, no: Not that either. Tantrism requires saintly discipline.[40] He had none, and practiced illicit sexuality, forbidden in Islam, with the illusion of that's being esoteric. While he was filming that TV appearance, the woman he made love to (illicitly)[41] every day, was right beside him. It *is* true that from reading his books, one would normally conclude that he was incapable of being passionate about women, but man! I tell you: Us human beings have got a *lot* of strange possibilities. Yesterday, I thought I'd seen them all. Today, I changed my mind!

Now there's a mystery in here along with a thistle: Why did he want to *appear* to be so devoid of love for women? The Prophet married and said that the one who did not marry was not "of him". Well look, I'm not sure; but I think it was because he thought he was somehow *above* the revelation of Islam. You name it: Whatever you can name, He was above it; and that, my friends, is a thriving thistle! Also, at least for a long time, he identified himself with Jesus Christ, and thought he was a Bodhisattva; but this subject is beyond me.

Remember the painting that he had made of a vision he had of me? A beautiful, naked woman is approaching, and the only witnesses were a child and a lion cub? That painting is absolutely captivating; but alack alas, it's like

39 "Women are the twin halves of men." (Narrated by Tirmidhi). "The believers who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best morals, and the best of you are those who are the best to their wives." (Tirmidhi). "Only an honourable man treats women with honour and integrity. And only a mean, deceitful and dishonest man humiliates and insults women." (Tirmidhi).

40 Only an ill-regarded, minor branch involves sexuality. That branch is considered heterodox.

41 The woman swallowing semen in oral sexuality is not permitted in Islam. He thought it was a great grace for us!

his life: Passion and heresy were hidden behind a genial personality, senses of traditional beauty, of the *childlike* and of *innocence*.[42]

His deception was incredibly charming and innocent-seeming. And I suspect that he even deceived himself, from childhood on. But *who* was *he*? And *who* was that one who deceived him: I'd say it was his genial lower self, or his ego. *That* became his boss!

Murayyim, the daughter of the second "wife": Before and after

Our lives would turn out to have much in common—albeit we were separated almost lifelong, aside from occasional visits. Well, let me tell you much of her story. I told you I met her when she was 12. When she was in her teens, she rebelled against the Tariqah, against most of her family and her whole ambience. One night she escaped from her house through a hatch in the roof. Then off she went to explore the world with some like-minded young people.

When her parents "woke up" in every way, they realized she'd plain run away; so the police and all possible authorities were alerted, and the whole extended family of the Shaykh began praying and doing Istikharah, but all to no avail.

Desolate months passed. Then a phone call came from a young Moroccan Muqaddam. We had visited his house several times, with her along; so she had found his house and knocked on his door when she got into too much trouble. Now the parts of her story didn't fit together for ages; but she had fallen asleep in a bus, letting a thief take her shoes, so she was barefoot; her money was used up, and her hair was full of lice; but there she was in Morocco, having traveled through France and Spain.

That faqir, who was very highly regarded by all of us for every reason, let her in of course; and showed her a magnificent bathroom where she got quite pure and clean. Then he left her alone in a room, where there was only one thing on a table: An article by the Shaykh on the Absolute. There certainly seemed to be a miracle! She read that, absorbed every word, was converted back to the Tariqah and to all her family's beliefs—even though she was quite aware of the sexual abnormalities (she had found out by accident that both her parents were sleeping with the two Schuons). They didn't seem important anymore, and she only wanted to go home and start life over.

The Moroccan Muqaddam put her on a plane and told her parents when to meet her. When they saw her as the top of the stairs leading down to the

42 Talking in a childlike manner, he used to tell us wives: "The world is round. I am the king. I don't know why." We all thought he was both humble and king of the world, until I met another one.

ramp, there she was, clad in a black, man's *burnous*.[43] They told us all (in the family) that she descended in a cloud of grace!

A few months passed, with everyone happy again. Out of the blue, so unexpectedly, came a letter from the Moroccan: He asked for her hand in marriage! And he was wealthy, handsome as I recall, and an important official in the King's Government... but above all, we had long had the impression that he was a saint! Not only a saint; but Sayyidah Hamidah, her mother; and Sayyidah Latifah, who was more than a mother to her—they had the idea that he was a *great* saint, *as* great as the Shaykh or greater. And as I recall, they thought he would be the Shaykh's successor. Their ideas were confirmed by the man's spiritual dreams.

Naturally, our Murayyim was soon to be married. First a treasure chest arrived, full of gifts for her; however, no one was left out: We all received elegant garments too—even Sidi Abdul Ali and I. Our being part of the Shaykh's spiritual family was obvious. Then came a lovely but tasteful marriage in the Shaykh's house, before they left on a honeymoon. Upon their return, Murayyim was full of supernatural stories about him: Everyone's dreams were fulfilled. He could receive help and information from the *jinn* (spirits) too; but we were not upset by that. On the contrary, Solomon, a Prophet in Islam, was in control of all the spirits: He forced them to help him, and wasn't troubled by them in the least.

Our special young lady went to live in Morocco, with Sidi Abdul Ali and I being the first to visit. Although I was appalled by the ostentatious wealth of their house (They had an awful looking, well-carved, Chinese, mahogany dragon-like thing for a seat), I melted at every word her husband said—without understanding a thing! Being used to my own inabilities, I was only looking at an inscription of the Divine Name, Allah, on the wall, and praying to understand that great saint. As for Murayyim, she had changed totally: A submissive Moroccan woman was she!

Once home, we invited the family to dinner; but as soon as I recounted the wonders enthusiastically; and Sidi Abdul Ali told the rest with his usual sobriety... they all began tearing what we said apart! *No one* liked the teachings of Murayyim's new husband. They did *not* approve of dealing with the spirits that were around, *or* the transformation of "our" daughter into what is a rather uninteresting kind of woman. For the umpteenth time, I learned about the opposite kinds of degeneration: The overly active kind of the Occident, and that of countries—not necessarily East—but the lands where the people were born believers. Those countries have lost their "intelligence" in an opposite way. "Our" daughter had been perverted in all our views, that evening. Everyone was brilliant, and even today, I'd say they were right. (Not that all sectors

43 That is a wide, loose men's garment, rather impressive, especially on a young woman. Apparently the young man threw away her clothes and sent her home in a burnous of his own.

of Moroccan society are oppressive; but she was in a bad quarter for a western woman).

Soon, her parents, the Shaykh and Latifeli, went to Morocco. That was when the Shaykh embraced her; but there was a Pandora's box full of problems for her—and not starting then. Aside from being embraced with passion, by her own spiritual master, three times her age, her mother told her that she and I were secret wives. She was also given some texts to read, written by Hamideli, and concluding that the Shaykh was a Nabi (a Prophet) but not a Rasul (a Prophet who brings a new religion). Now that is word for word against the Quran; us Occidental fuqara hardly thought about that; but when Murayyim's husband heard of those texts, he and all the Moroccan disciples, were appalled. Later, the Shaykh, who had read them, said he hadn't been paying attention (while praising her intention to honor him, in private). Anyway, the embrace was enough. Hearing about two illegitimate wives didn't help; and well, all told, the Moroccan Muslims left the Tariqah in haste and en masse!

Murayyim, dreadfully upset by everything to do with her Shaykh and parents, had two children she adored, but an oppressively Muslim-Muslim kind of husband. By Muslim-Muslim I mean that he was strict and narrow; he couldn't give any room to an Occidental wife, who quite regretted the enthusiasm of her parents in sending her away to a foreign land at a very young age—and not hardly knowing her future husband either.

Finally, she took her two young children and went to visit her parents, who lived in Bloomington, Indiana by then. She wrote to me, "When I came to the US with my son and my daughter in the summer of 1982, my deepest secret hope was that I would be allowed to stay and never go back to Morocco."

So there she was, a young mother, with wealthy parents, and hopes of keeping her children, as mothers usually do. They planned to find lawyers; but then her Moroccan husband threatened to reveal the private life of the Shaykh if she didn't give up her children! She wrote:

> "It was not Moroccan law that made my children go back to their father, it was (my husband's)[44] threats to divulge Schuon's secret life and then an *Istikharah*."

Here is an enormous thistle; and I tell you: Nearly all thistles look alike! What I mean is that *every time* the central people in that Tariqah judged by supernatural means (dreams, locutions, Istikharah), they were dead wrong! I've asked two, well-known and *highly* educated Muslim authorities about that Istikharah and all others: One cannot do Istikharah, asking about something perfectly clear in the sacred law (Shariah). It is a great sin to separate a mother from her young children. Furthermore, one cannot do anything to hide the

44 The parentheses are mine; I prefer to omit the name of her Moroccan husband.

sins of anyone like Frithjof Schuon. One can, as the Prophet did, avoid punishing people. There were lies to protect his reputation too; and he approved of them—lying shamelessly himself.

When Murayyim's parents and Sayyidah Latifah heard the threats of her estranged husband, they all had the gall to do a group Istikharah (with the current Na'ib, Sidi Junayd too). They asked if she should give up her children, or what. Well, two highly educated Imams tell me that one *absolutely cannot* do Istikharah to ask about something which is against the Sacred Law (Shariah) and it is a grave sin to separate a mother from her children. Moreover, one can't do anything to save the reputation of a very sinful, false spiritual master. And the word "Istikharah" means "seeking the goodness (of God)" and there was no goodness in what they were asking: It was against what God detests!

Due to that false Istikharah, she divorced her Moroccan husband in 1983, and sent her children back to Morocco—saving the Shaykh's reputation. He thought he had won: She would take back what she had said about that passionate hug; but he had four wives by then, and he had told me he could never have "married" her anyway: He was married to her mother. Surprise! He thought of the Sacred Law once in a while!

Her little boy, Humayd, back in Morocco, was subject to a terrible conflict of cultures: He had learned too much that was unsavory about the Tariqah on the one hand, and on the other, he was raised without his mother, in a strict Islamic environment, which sounds hard to swallow, even to me. When he was 17, he committed suicide, shooting himself by propping up a gun in his room. Grief-stricken, but seeing that he had been subject to a plethora of conflicts, Murayyim returned for his funeral; but he had already been buried. It seems that in Morocco, women may not attend funerals: She only saw his grave. Poor Humayd had been all too aware of what was wrong in the Tariqah; but also in his Moroccan life; he'd grown up without his mother too—albeit she visited her children.

So there was Murayyim like me—with no family and a life full of tragedies. Then came the Grand Jury Hearing in 1991. And here's what Murayyim did: "I spoke before the Grand Jury, saying all that I knew, knowing that I had no evidence about current events, only knowledge of past behaviors and lies. I don't know what others did. It's been nearly 30 years now... I don't recall everything." Then she was disinherited by her parents, who were *extremely* wealthy (They had gold buried under the concrete in their basement for security)! Sayyidah Latifah, who was more like her mother than her own parents, called her evil (for telling the truth, mind you!); but alas: The evil had been on the other side!

She started her life over again, but lost her faith in *all* religions, and in God (Well, who would want a God like the one she'd become used to?). There's an anti-cult group she belongs to; and due to compassion, she is a vegan.

Well, after getting her PhD in French Language and Literature, she taught most of her life at a well-known, American university, Notre Dame. Finally remarried and perfectly happily, so, she went with her new husband and knocked on the door of her parents' house. By then the Shaykh had passed away, and her parents accepted her back into the family with all affection. They died after loving care from her; and she arranged their funerals with other family members, but with a host of fuqara, who were hostile to her there too. She made it possible to bury her parents, in the company of her enemies, just as she had made a new life for herself in spite of them. Here's her talking:

> "The whole experience of leaving Morocco and trying to find a new balanced life in the US was horrendous. I had to pay so much, and my children even more than I. It was a nightmare for years on end, and still is when I think of Souleyma's (her daughter) estrangement from me. I am happy now because I have a wonderful life."
>
> "Feeling grateful that I managed to make a life for myself in spite of the horror."

Now she is family-less like me. Her now grown and married, Muslim daughter doesn't speak to her; and the brother she still loves, barely speaks; but she has made a new life for herself in the midst of tragedy. I'll meet her several times later on, in the chapter called Luxury at Lakeview; but we have both good memories and the most tragic losses in common. Sometimes, there's no one in the world who can understand me but her. That's when we remember the character of a chameleon; but it's also because we both try to live in the traditional beauty of the Tariqah. No one can imagine that who hasn't seen and lived in it. There was only good in it—except what it hid: That beauty veiled what wasn't good at all! In my heavenly garden, there were so many thistles: I didn't notice them until they'd grown as high as the trees!

Bare naked, or plain modest?

When one reads about how shy and modest Muhammad was, and that the virtue of Islam is "*haya*" (modesty, humility, shyness... It's a vast concept) then, and only then, does one see many other thistles—things that wouldn't "prick" Americans like me. He preferred us women to wear slightly transparent skirts in the summer, and not to cover our heads so that every single hair was hidden for the ritual prayers; for which we also wore only Hindu saris, which the young faqirat used to let show their stomach and hips until the actual salats started. He had the nerve to say that "The Prophet wouldn't have have liked a tight, strict covering of women!" If only he had read ahadith! It was Muhammad who ordered the complete covering of women—for prayer, *and* when they went an inch outside their houses. He said that we were beautiful;

precious; and to be protected from the glances of others, as well as from Satan. Nothing was to show but our faces and hands. We also had frequent musical gatherings, during which the young women were scantily dressed "because I enjoy hearing the music more, when there are pleasant views!" What a line from an aesthete; but I thought nothing of it until remembering it today!

Most of you can tell by going to town: Do you see any women, who are quite modestly dressed? Nothing fits tightly; all parts of the body are covered except the hands and the face; nothing is transparent, and no "charms" show—no lipstick, make-up, jewelry or perfume. Those are typical Muslim women: But I had no idea who they were or why they looked like that. Men too are supposed to be modestly dressed, and if they must talk to women, they lower their gaze. Frithjof Schuon's cult of "sacred nudity" was a sheer invention, contrary to all God said. It doesn't exist in Hinduism either—except in a marginal, heterodox branch of Tantrism. He went further than even that!

Our version of polygamy too: That had nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. I was bedazzled by a moralistic practice of magnanimity, so I was charmed by scenes I regret having seen. Every virtue can become moralistic, if it's exaggerated or loses sight of what God wants. Remember how I was thinking when Sayyidah Hamidah and I were with our "so-called" husband? God and His Prophet detest that kind of illicit gathering; and two women may never see one another naked.

And do you remember how I thought Sayyidah Hamidah had a melted ego when I came—that she was as magnanimous as I was? Many decades later, I heard from Murayyim that she actually remained exceedingly jealous and tried to regain her lost position as his favorite, in ways I'd not have imagined, by adding Murayyim into the picture. May God have mercy on Hamideli. I would be so happy to see her again as a woman transformed by piety, intelligence and love. She had all three, and could have died in a wonderful state.

There were many other problems with people, although I do still think that they were nearly all geniuses, and/or exceedingly attractive and gifted. It would take me a lifetime to realize that what matters is the character of one's friends, and not at all their exterior charms. Now let me lead you further through my lovely garden. It would be some 40–50 years before I'd see all the thistles.

The great homeopathic doctor

I had several adventures to do with medicine. One was when there was tension between Sayyidah Latifah and me. We couldn't have tensions around the Shaykh; he'd become quite unhappy, angry—or worse, he'd get asthma. That could become serious, so we were all careful and tried to settle things among ourselves.

Well, my best friend, Latifeli, was also the spiritual mistress for all of us women. She was effectively the queen of the Tariqah too, and for good reasons. She was the most remarkable woman I've ever known. All told, it was really not easy to even dream she'd *ever* be wrong. But she was.

She was a staunch advocate of homeopathy, was quite against modern medicine, and was a tremendous admirer of a great homeopath, named Dr. Senn. But I was worried, because the Shaykh was so susceptible to attacks of asthma; I wanted him to see a regular doctor; and, after months of my campaigning, *he* agreed, so off they went. They talked to the doctor and maybe had tests; but returned with Latifeli triumphant! The doctor had said he was a good friend of Dr. Senn's, and admired him greatly. Moreover, nothing extraordinary was wrong; so we all settled down.

Several fuqara went to Dr. Senn and were quite admiring. They wanted me to meet him too, so I'd see for myself; and indeed, I was planning to—especially due to hearing their reports of how people from other countries would come to his house in the middle of the night, even waking him up, desperate, but soon be cured. It seemed a bit much in my eyes. I mean really exaggerated; but I never want to become hardened—unable to see good.

Well, then an adopted sister of mine happened to get a job as a secretary in Dr. Senn's office. She told me that he had paranoia, which was exactly my intuition. It seemed that his employees and longtime supporters had written him a long letter, pleading with him to stop accusing them, when they had been donating all their time and resources to producing products he had developed. Each statement was backed up by facts and figures. My sister had read it; and said it was incontrovertible.

The Shaykh and I were sharing everything, so I told him. He actually ordered that faqirah to copy the letter secretly, and give it to me. Although she really didn't want to (it was against the law, and could get her fired, for starters) she did manage to get it to me (but later left the Tariqah).

Unfortunately, it was clear as a bell: The stories we had heard came from the megalomania of a severe paranoid personality disorer, and the doctor's devoted friends were heartbroken by his false accusations of them—the very ones who most loved and admired him. I was told that my precious Latifeli accepted the truth of it, but was heartbroken. She didn't want me to talk about that ever again. I haven't; but I've never been scared of truth: I love it on all levels.

Sometimes, understanding between people becomes impossible. The character of Dr. Senn was a simple thing back then, between Latifeli and me, only about a doctor (who may have been a fine person at heart) but our lack of talking and ironing things out on a tiny subject, developed on other planes, and concerned many subjects, until we had such a total separation that we'll die apart. I'm only telling you all, because such things are a part of everyone's "human *and* spiritual adventures." And have you noticed in here, and in your

own life, how one can have many ways of relating to people: Some come, others go; there are such surprising new ones, and astonishing losses? I'll tell you a secret though: Faithful people, who accept the truth with a small t, and the Truth with a capital T—we never change. People may leave us; but we don't leave them.

Hot water for me!

Once we had a visitor from another country. Well, we nearly always had, say one to ten visitors from other countries; but this was a young lady alone, and she was a damsel in distress. Her medicine had run out; it wasn't available in Switzerland, and she'd hardly slept for three days. I told her what pharmacies were open and found the name of the nearest one. There was something odd about the time: It was a Sunday or a holiday, so nearly everything was closed. She didn't feel confident about taking a taxi to the pharmacy, so I told her, "My medicine cabinet has all the common remedies; I have the same thing the pharmacist will give you."

Not having been born yesterday, I added that whatever medicine she took was her responsibility, not mine; and she was not to tell *anyone* I'd given her that. She had to take it *exactly* as if she'd gone to the pharmacy and bought it. She agreed, and went back to her hotel. Remember, I was surrounded by people who *only* believed in homeopathy. And one of those "people" was Sayyidah Latifah, who was a force to be reckoned with. Another was Sayyidah Hamidah, who came in as a close second. And they weren't alone! We were a close-knit community of disciples who had moved heaven and earth to live near the Shaykh.

The next day, I heard a lot from Sayyidah Latifah: That young lady woke up, shaking all over and unable to walk. It was my fault! Later, I saw the visitor walking by and went over to see if she was better: She was a bit better, she said; but she added nothing about breaking her promise to me. Then she went home; and after a few months, we heard that she was emotionally unbalanced and was in a mental hospital. Don't ask me what I learned; well no, I'll tell you; but not everyone will like or understand this: I was living in a heaven on earth, but the people around me could be all too human. I mean that for all their qualities, in retrospect, I remember many incidents in which no one seemed very wise!

Drugged or in a spiritual state: That is the question!

He had the most convincing visions, dreams and locutions; but they told him exactly what he wanted to hear. He also had *haals*,[45] he said. Two he told me about were when he looked especially handsome, photographed naked, in the woods; and then during a majlis once, his speech was slurred one night, after he'd been prescribed Ativan, a calming benzodiazepine, which stops anxiety dead.

When I saw that his speech was slurred that night, I said, "Oh that's a common effect of Ativan." Then he and everyone said, "Not at all: He was in a haal." I did think they were a bit naïve, as I'd had Ativan myself, and I could easily imagine its effect on someone unused to any medicine that wasn't homeopathic; but I forgot the whole incident. It took decades more to see how things fit together.

What does Ibn Arabi say? He says that paranormal states can come from the Spirit, the ego or the devil. Haals, dreams, visions and locutions are paranormal states. His "paranormal states" looked *quite* highfalutin. Let's take a look at some; but I'm sorry not to remember nearly enough, and there were major "events" I didn't hear of or understand back then. I can tell you quite enough though, and the telltale sign is that he always "saw" his own greatness, and what he desired: He didn't have experiences that taught him or reproached him. Not one, ever.

An experience made him a Shaykh (He was not a successor of his Shaykh. Another man was chosen by dreams; but in a legitimate way). And he had heard a voice, calling him by the exalted names: Isa Nur ud-Din. (Jesus, the Light of Religion: That's what his name meant). He saw the greatest figures: Khidr[46] and Maryam; and he saw the Prophet once at my house, but not as his teacher: He saw the Prophet as described by his own "revelation" (his word) of six themes of meditation.

Years before he had even two wives, he had a locution, saying, "The Prophet wants you to have several wives." It is absolutely impossible that Muhammad could have willed the sleazy kinds of marriages we had: He detested everything of the sort, and was shy, pure and decent in every detail.

The Shaykh had seen me, naked of course, in a vision—predicting my coming. He also had a visionary experience of sexual union, with The Virgin Mary, the purest holy woman; and, best or worse of all, he had a paranormal state in which Maryam adopted him as her son. A voice in himself then repeated the poem that Hamideli and I used to say together. In that poem, we used to call him "Jesus, son of Maryam" and "a revelation of mercy for mankind."

45 A temporary state of spiritual elevation.

46 Khidr is a mysterious person in Islam, a Prophet who did not die, but was taken to Paradise. He really does appear sometimes to teach saintly people, who have no other teacher as great. Khidr is often thought to be the Old Testament Prophet, Elijah, who did not die, but was taken to Heaven in a fiery chariot.

Everything fits together: He thought that he himself, was a revelation—therefore not bound by scriptures, and he identified himself with Jesus, from before he was even a Muslim.

He also had an exceedingly thistley dream, which he thought was sacred, about the great Shaykh, known in the West as René Guénon. Actually, for him, everything concerning himself was sacred: Even his taste was the Prophetic norm; but strangely enough, his taste adapted to circumstances. He changed the rules, and the Truth/truth too, to suit himself, as needed. Well, back to a dream: He told me how he dreamt he was in paradise; but he felt rather troubled, because he saw René Guénon a little way away. He had criticized Guénon and thought he might be angry. No sooner had he thought that, than Guénon walked over and embraced him.[47] I didn't realize all that was wrong in there until I was trying to tell you, just now: That's a great example of how hard it can be to see thistles in a garden. Guénon was his master, in every way; and it was Guénon who was the true Shaykh; but Frithjof Schuon had no idea what a Shaykh is, so he attributed a petty little ego problem, to the very person who had recognized *his own* monstrous ego. Guénon knew that Frithjof Schuon said, "It must be known that I am infallible"—a saying that came from his ego. There *is* such a thing as infallibility; but that comes from perfect conformity with revelation. Frithjof Schuon, for the first time (*bid'ah*) founded a so-called "Tariqah" upon his own ideas—*not* upon revelation. As usual, his dream about Guénon was favorable to his ego; and the great Guénon loved him!

His lower soul, or his ego, had megalomania. However, he used his gifts of personality, humor, (temporary) love, and a sense of beauty, to mask his underlying nature. I'm very sorry to have to tell you all this; but it should give you a sense of the depth of perfidy around us in the modern world. His way of life was extremely attractive, and his books seem sublime, *unless* one knows true Islam (and the vast majority of his disciples were and still are Occidentals like me, who had entered a rather "foreign" religion), and *unless* one had glimpses into his so-called "private" life, in which he was too prone to nudity, for the wrong reasons and in the wrong places. The faults had nothing to do with *true* Islam: Us converted westerners just didn't know enough about what that is! Now I'm often telling you all who I'm speaking to at the moment: Well, these remarks do not only concern Islam. Occidentals are becoming Buddhists and Hindus too: It is exceedingly important to know a religion well. Otherwise one is a sitting duck, ready to be taken in by foxes.

47 See Appendix II: Letters From René Guénon Concerning Frithjof Schuon.

Beauty is the splendor of the true; and, well... it isn't too!

On our way to London once, driving through France, in Sidi Abdul Qayyum's Mercedes, we passed estates, surrounded by endless acres of mown grass and flowers. The Shaykh lamented their owners' "losing their karma," by taking so much in this world. Then came miles of the most boring land and towns, in which no one seemed to care about nature, beauty or home life. Unlike the English, many of the French love style and are gourmets, but haven't much sense of what a home is.

Finally, we were all settled in our hotel rooms and were being taken around—being shown the sights of London and its countryside, by numerous disciples. There were vast fields with great clusters of daffodils, and many patches of wild flox, an inimitably delicate, blue wildflower that grows easily there.

We saw precious little English cottages too; but the main attraction was the actual (first) Festival of Islam, which had been magnificently orchestrated by several fuqara. Some of us, not myself, saw the Queen give a lecture, and met the Shahbanu of Iran. Of course the Shahbanu noticed Sayyidah Latifah and approached her—asking where she had found her lovely, traditional Muslim dress. Then they spoke about fostering tradition; and of course Sayyidah Latifah took the opportunity to convince the Shahbanu of the greatness of the Shaykh. He was well-known already, through the Iranian Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who quite took to visiting kings and queens. Actually, he was too worldly to be a real Shaykh (being a great man is enough: He sure was that)! My only college friend, Ilona, had seen the worldliness; but I had no idea what worldly was back then. Although I hadn't been interested enough to go, I loved hearing them all describe the great dignity and discipline of the Shahbanu of Iran and of the Queen of England.

But the exhibits were the best! We saw Islam in every culture in the world—Japanese Islam, Islam in India, China—everywhere, and always molded into the cultures of the people without any strain. It was passionately interesting!

The high point was an exhibit of illuminated Qurans. When we walked into one of the several rooms, full of splendid beauty, we were overwhelmed: I could tell by their faces; and I sure knew how I felt. Well, while we were all trying to find words, the Shaykh began talking—answering the question none of us had found words for. We all recognized him as the King of Wisdom, Beauty and Truth.

He quoted, as he often did, a saying from Plato: "Beauty is the splendor of the true." Then, going on, he said that the beauty in those illuminated Qurans, proved that Islam was a true religion; and furthermore, someone who saw those Qurans could rightfully be converted to Islam.

Actually, people have become Christians due to seeing the beauty of the Saint Chapelle too; and a friend of mine became a Muslim, due to the beauty

of the Muslim call to prayer, called the Adhan. Now here's a *thistle!* Eyes open you all: Plato said that: God did not. One has to be careful about making a hard and fast spiritual rule out of a philosopher's words. *God* told us how to reach Him by *His* Paths and using *His* words, not those of any philosopher. And if you were to come to *my* house, I'd know how to tell you to get to *my house*. I mean God tells us how to get to Him: Philosophers do not. To forestall an objection: My life has a theme, which is a sentence: من كان لي أنا له (He who belongs to Me, I belong to him). God didn't say that (Mistakenly, I thought He did): It's a Berber proverb. However, it's a perfect description of the generosity of God towards us, as expressed in other things He *did* say. When I heard that, I thought it was a hadith qudsi. Then some other famous Shaykh pooh-poohed my idea; but I was *more* right, by far, to believe in it, than he was to pooh-pooh it. He has thistles somewhere too; but don't get me started: Thistle-filled Shuyukh are in trouble with me!

It's as easy as falling off a log to contradict the Shaykh's "freezing" of Plato's idea into the form of an esoteric law, which moreover gave him rights contrary to the rights God gave us humans. I mean: Neither Plato nor Frithjof Schuon was God. And Frithjof Schuon *used*, *stole*, *made a prostitute of that idea, for his ego and desires*. He said, "If it's beautiful, I can have it and do it." Therefore, he had the right to beautiful, naked women, and forbidden dances—calling his and Plato's ideas esoteric, and *above* what God said. Every halfwitted Muslim knows there's nothing higher than God's word. Actually, even the simplest Muslims who know that, are brilliant, due to being on a Divine Ray: It was the Shaykh who was a halfwit! I like Einstein who said: "Two things are infinite: The universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe!"

There must be countless examples proving the opposite of that saying of Plato's, which *is* great, and *does* apply sometimes; but it's not *always true*, at all! For one thing, God chose one of the most desolate places on earth, as its spiritual center, in His final revelation. Mecca is no haven for people like Frithjof Schuon, who decidedly did not want to go there, nor did he want his disciples there. At one point, he made fun of those who made Hajj or Umrah and said they should walk around his house instead.

The Quran and ahadith teach us about God's ways *and* the ways of the Shaytan (devil). Some of the ways of our arch-enemy are tricky, so hear what God Himself says in the Quran about the thistle I've been telling you about:

> "By Allah, We verily sent messengers unto the nations before thee, but the devil made their deeds fairseeming (beautiful) unto them. So he is their patron this day, and theirs will be a painful doom." (Quran 16:63)

Now he was far too smart to say we should walk around his house, in public, *or* to write it; but us wives knew everything. He also, when asked if his six themes were in the Quran, replied exactly, "I don't care what is in *any* book."

(I should know, because I listened to a tape of him saying that, umpteen times. I was astounded, but not thistle-conscious yet). To top it all off, he told us wives that the fuqara should follow *his* Sunnah, and not the outmoded one of Muhammad. As for what Muhammad, the Messenger of God, said—well he said that all his followers would go to Paradise except those who refuse. "Who are those who refuse?" he was asked. "Those who will not follow MY Sunnah!"

Now, back to the subject of beauty and what it proves: Once a companion was climbing a date palm tree, and the lower part of his legs became exposed. His legs were so skinny and funny-looking, that other companions began to laugh. Then came the reproach of the Prophet, who told them that the spiritual stature of the man they were mocking, was greater than all the mountains in sight![48]

"The Shaykh" stole, used, appropriated, actually made a prostitute of the beauty of traditional cultures. That beauty convinced people of his greatness, blinded them, and kept them with him through trials in their "faith"—faith in him, not in God. And some gullible wealthy people, as well as some diplomats, had traces of worldliness and ignorance: They contributed their wealth and their names, to further the "message," which had such a lovely traditional and natural beauty. The "civilization" which he created (I'd almost agree with the word: It was a marvelous creation!) had something worldly in it. Wealthy, highly educated and distinguished people fell for it. So did I and many young people full of imagination, originality or talent: The ambience sure seemed to be a Heaven on earth.

You see (well you probably don't; but I can tell you) there are two great, unsurpassable sources of beauty in the world. One comes from nature: Most of you probably realize that. The other one comes from the true (revealed) religions. Each one produced a culture which was so beautiful that it *illustrated* the truth of the religion. *If* you become passionately curious like me, you'll travel around in the world—and doing it on the internet is infinitely better than nothing. There you'll see proofs for your souls. Actually, there is a greater beauty than those two; but recognizing it may be a gift or only comes with time: That's the beauty of character and piety in some people. A very few people actually have divine light in them: Those are the people I go crazy in love with. Those are the self-effacing possessors of divine knowledge. When one can see that, nothing else seems important. The sight, or experience of seeing them produces overwhelming love, *and* it actually produces *knowledge of the truth with a capital T!* That beauty is still found in living people today. If you are very sensitive, you can see tiny reflections of that goodness in nature, especially in animals, and in a certain "gift" that's in the beauty of traditional art and music.

48 This is an orally transmitted hadith, told by a Tijani spiritual master. Turuq, which have Gnostic qualities, often have a history of great scholarship and a store of sacred documents.

The Thistle, which was the hardest to recognize (and which is growing all over the world and in all religions) is an aberration that can occur in spiritual realization itself. *Very strangely,* one can be a realized person, and yet go totally astray, be arrogant to end all, or have a little stain or two. That comes from not following revelation (in Islam, the Quran, Sunnah and Shariah); but also from not submitting to a true spiritual master, or from some subtle form of idolatry—like over-estimating a human being. Over-estimating one, means under-estimating others. The prime candidate for being over-estimated is guess who? Oneself! That happens to extraordinarily spiritual people, who refuse to be guided by revelation and by the precedents of all the great masters.[49]

In his first book, Frithjof Schuon says true esoterism is to break away from exoterism because once one is realized he is in no need of the law. This explains why he mixed religious forms—he believed he was not in need of any religious form, including Islam, revealed by God. That is sheer insolence—putting oneself *above* what God said.

Then in his second book, Frithjof Schuon explained why he had all the thistly traits I mentioned above. In that second book, he says that the goal of life is to be realized (united with God). Once one is realized one knows this world is an illusion so one's actions do not really matter in the grand scheme of things. This happened because he did not follow his Shaykh, the Shaykh al-Alawi, or bow to revelation.[50] So, even *after* realization, all kinds of errors can come in. One has to bow down before all manner of "things" to go straight on "up". He wanted to rise, not bow low before anything. Also; but I'm not certain about this: It seems that some people are born with a "gift" of spiritual intelligence. That *seems*, but God knows best, to include some types of realization, or a state that quite resembles it. I think, or dare opine, that Frithjof Schuon was born with an opening in the spirit,[51] which was akin to spiritual realization. That opened his "spirit" to many possible downfalls; and alas, he fell into a lot of them.

It is *not* easy to find a true spiritual master—especially in these times when we are seeing things which would seem to be impossible. When a Muslim cannot find someone, the Prophet himself may be his Guide. In any case, he is *The Master* of all the Masters of the Way.

For Muslims only (but you're all welcome)!

Here I'll put only what Muslims really must know in advance about one "great" heresy in esoterism. I wrote "great," regarding a heresy, because it is widespread (known in over 188 countries, and there are only 195); it is

49 See Appendix VIII: Quotations From The Masters of Tasawwuf.
50 See Appendix VIII: Quotations From The Masters of Tasawwuf.
51 See Appendix VI: A Chart of Human Zones.

dreadful (because the authority of God, His Prophets, saints and scholars, are all usurped); it's extremely convincing (partly because there's a fantastic difference between the books and the life of someone who seems to be even more than a great saint); and finally: It was for me, and still is for many, *incredibly hard to get out of!* That is partly due to visions, dreams, locutions, partial realizations, ecstasies, charm, humor, physical appearance, aristocratic manners; an ineffably beautiful way of life in traditional beauty and in nature; things that seemed like miracles; lots of genial personality or charisma; temporary spiritual states; very convincing lies; multi-faceted genius, including spiritual-seeming genius; practically all the gifts there are, and all kinds of illusions that nobody ever imagined, *except for all the great masters, and their master, Muhammad.* They imagined, foresaw, predicted and wrote warnings, which many, quite wrongly, consider unimportant, out-of-date, or surpassed. You will see below that the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and the gnostic saints, were *all* absolutely right and agreed. Tradition began with God Himself, and we will see that Frithjof Schuon actually perverted tradition, while claiming to be the greatest traditionalist imaginable. He was, heaven help us, a disastrous heretic, seeming to be a mercy for mankind, right at the worst time in the history of the world!

The Quran is the Truth; the Sunnah is the Model of the Truth in "human form," and the Shariah is the practical Law, which puts the Quran and the Sunnah into effect for us. The subject of this site belittled all the forms of Truth, as you'll discover gradually, by reading further. To top it all off, he made himself, or rather his genius, the *Criterion* of truth. The Quran is called "The Criterion." His taste also became the Norm, so what he found good and beautiful was allowed. It even gets worse! His body, his race and his desires were idealized. Alas! He was a megalomaniac! We didn't even notice, for a multitude of very convincing reasons. The beauty in my Swiss "heaven" was hiding many a thistle. I'm clueing you in early, so you'll see them before they take over *your* garden too.

PROOF

Chapter 9
Jobs Found by Angels

"For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways..."

Psalm 911[52]

Peace at the United Nations

My first job, working for UNESCO, seemed to have been chosen by an angel, because my boss, Liliane, the museum attached, and my living place in the country, were all dear to my heart. For three years, I loved my work there, became fond of Liliane, and was delighted with the marvelous view on Lake Geneva. I saw swans every day, often with their little ones (signets) riding on their backs, colored sails on boats racing in the wind, and the famous water jet. That's a high jet of water, which is often remembered when anyone says "Geneva."

Monsieur Magnat, the graphologist

When the day came for me to leave UNESCO, there was a party. Liliane and my colleagues were there. We had cake, and then Liliane walked to the door with me. While we were hugging one another, she handed me a piece of paper in an envelope. She said it was the graphological analysis that a graphologist had made when I was in the United States before she hired me. Well

52 The Psalms are revelation for Jews, Christians and Muslims.

guess! I was so curious and I went right home and read it, so to speak "in the dark." It was so accurate what he had written! I had no idea that a graphologist could know anybody so well. He said some things about me that I didn't know myself, and he put words on feelings I had. Even today, it's manifesting right now while I'm talking to you. He wrote in there: "She has an almost life or death need to be inspiring people with enthusiasm." And it's so true! I really *need* to talk to people and inspire them—to, in the end, believe in God and glorify Him; but in little ways, too, every day, I always feel like encouraging people for whatever they have to do. If they're sick, it just comes naturally to me to say something nice to them. If they're Christians, I think of a line in the Bible. I was just made like that. It's not a virtue, it's a natural thing. And I sure got some natural faults too. But as Einstein said (laugh please): "I have no particular genius: I'm just passionately curious!"

Well, that graphologist was named Monsieur Magnat, and later, when I was working at the World Scout Organization, I had to hire a secretary several times. Once, it was a big problem. I put an ad in the paper and had about 30 answers; but I didn't know what to do next. It takes ages to interview so many people. So, I got the idea to go to Monsieur Magnat, sit there with him and see what he would say about each one.

But I played a trick on him. I put my own handwriting in there. He knew me as Maude Murray, so I wrote a letter applying for the job and signed it Molly Harrison. Harrison is my maiden name, my father's name, and Molly at least starts with an M like Maude, so in I went and sat next to this character. He was really a character, a bit of a sexy character; but he wasn't dangerous right on the spot. Anyway, it was safe to sit in his office.

Well, he went through those papers quickly; but he stopped sometimes to teach me something: "This one has had electroshock treatment. She's got no mental stability whatsoever."

I doubted him and said, "How do you know that?"

He pulled out another piece of paper, a letter from someone who had had electroshock treatments. He showed me the comparison of the two handwritings, so I knew exactly what he was talking about. Then he took out another page from one of my applicants. "This one is looking for a big cheese."

"*What*?" I said.

He said: "She just wants a big cheese, so she can sit in the middle and eat for the rest of her life. She doesn't want to do any work!"

Finally he came to my own handwritten letter. "Now this one: She would be like a sister to you; you two would get along perfectly; but I don't see her being your secretary," he said. (God forgive me, it's sort of a compliment, but he added, "Behind every princess there has to be a gnome").

And he went on a little bit. I laughed and laughed, then admitting that the letter was written by me. He scolded me soundly; but he wasn't really mad. I

think he found that a cute trick; but he scolded me for trying to fool him. See what a good graphologist he was!

Much later, a time came when I was dreaming of having a job I could do at home, because that travelling for hours to Geneva every day was so tiring that I just burst out in tears sometimes. I dreamt of something I could do at home. Could I be an herbalist or a graphologist? (Any other idea?)

Well first, I read lots of books on herbs and tried making brews—giving one to the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah to try. They took one taste of it and said I should give that to my enemies and not my friends. Discouraged (because I thought their words came from heaven) that idea died.

Then I thought: "Well, maybe I could be a graphologist!" So I called that Monsieur Magnat and asked if he'd give me lessons. Sure. So, there I was, sitting next to this character who was also very sexy. He was naughty about the things he said; but I'm sort of like a beach ball: I can put up with about anything. He tried to teach me. It really *is* a science, and it really *can* be learned. But, in addition to having learned graphology as a science, he had something else: A gift he'd inherited from his father. He not only saw the handwriting, but he also had some kind of a psychic gift, so through the handwriting, he could see the person just the way some people can know what your soul is like by seeing your aura. It's a mystery to me. I gave up; but there are great graphologists, mostly in Europe, who have no gift. They can be dead on center, only due to the science. Europeans are more open-minded about many sciences, whereas Americans have a mania about being perfectly "safe, sure, unlikely to die"—as if we could stay alive and in a material perfection.

There are several other ways to know us people without meeting us. One can know much about us, by our facial traits, or only our feet, by our auras, or by a number of sciences. Trust me to find out; but in the end there's only one significant way of knowing people, and a way of curing them in body and soul. That's by being "a doctor of souls;" and those doctors are such great Gnostic saints that all my petty interests in people become nothing in comparison, when I read a brief text by a Tijani Muqaddam, who left this world long ago: Muhammad al-Hafiz. When I saw what he wrote, I knew that all my curiosity about people had led nowhere: Real Knowledge, about everything, comes from God.

Well, I failed to learn graphology. My mind is not the greatest in any case: I'm only good at talking, or writing like the way I write to you. So I gave up on graphology; but my father, "Sammy," came to visit me in Switzerland, and I took him to meet that character, Monsieur Magnat. Those two got along like a couple of thieves; they were charming together, as they both had that bouncy, jumping-Mexican-bean kind of personality. It was a cute visit. Then I left with my dear little father; and I never saw Monsieur Magnat again.

A missing angel once!

After three years at UNESCO (which was so far away) and after giving up on the idea of being an herbalist or a graphologist, I finally ended up taking a job at Nestlé SA, the enormous food-making company that's all over the world. It had 1,800 (!) employees, in one modern building, that was in a strikingly beautiful place looking out on Lake Lausanne. Remember: That was what Lake Geneva was called down where I *lived*. All inter-governmental jobs were in Geneva. Well, Nestlé was an international corporation; but its employees were mostly Swiss, and ay ya yay: It was an awful, boring place!

The walls were made mostly of glass; so when you approached the building on a train, you could see right through it to the lake. The view, but only the view, was heavenly; and if you were important enough, you got an office on the lake side; but everyone else, like me, was on the wrong side. I was supposed to oversee several employees, as head of a library devoted to research—on food, advertising, selling, and everything that didn't interest me at all. Worse: I detest *all* those subjects!

Since the walls inside were mostly glass, our supervisors could see every move we made, no matter where they or we were; but that didn't really bother me. What did matter was that I had come in on my first day, with a plant for my desk; but nothing alive was allowed in there! It felt like an inhuman, sterile environment—so much so that it was surprising us humans were allowed. But the worst things *were* the humans, who worked there; and there was no way to get away from them. Even our breaks were controlled—with a whole department having tea and snacks together—no loners. But my "cell-mates" were obscene and worldly, to such an extent that I often had no idea what their jokes meant; and even when they weren't joking, the subject was often, of all things, cars! I don't mind cars; they're useful, but what a boring subject! My colleagues wanted to be rich and own things, have power... and sexuality was everywhere—in dress, speech and jokes.

I detested that job, and didn't have any illusions about angels having found that one for me (but every test has its role). If I hadn't had that job, I'd never have been able to recognize angels: Those have the most amazing ways, and the most astonishing thing is that they can appear, visibly; but sometimes in hard to recognize forms! I kept looking for other jobs on my end of the lake; but way far away, back in Geneva, a non-governmental, but international organization, was dying to hire me. That was The World Organization of the Scout Movement (Boy and Girl Scouts). I kept refusing—saying it was too far from the dear little village of Pully, where I was planted like a well-rooted tree.

A heavenly place

I did *not* want to work there; but one of the administrators had too much warmth and charisma—whispering encouragement in my ear, or something I forget. (Be careful about that kind of thing)! Anyway, somehow, they buttered me up: I fell for that buttering, and took the job; but for ten years, I had to walk, take a bus, a train and another bus to get there. The one who buttered me up had charisma—lots of it. He had talked to me as if he were my father, warmly, encouraging me to help the great World Scout Organization—so great in his eyes. All my colleagues would be men, and they were all grown up, devoted, big Boy Scouts. That suited me fine. Compared to other people I could have worked with, those men were angels. I couldn't go back to working at UNESCO with Liliane again: It didn't allow part-time, and I had gotten this new organization to accept a three-day week! You see: I was married to two men, had a job, and was supposedly a "faqirah." That means a woman disciple, on a spiritual path in Islam, and it requires many prayers and such. I was feeling overwrought much of the time; but was too young and happy to complain.

I was supposed to create an international library, in a huge room upstairs with a lovely view. But before I'd had time to consider the scenery, I had to face a colleague and sort of a boss, who would have his desk opposite mine. Oh my goodness! That unhandsome, smart as a whip Egyptian, was hilarious! He had me laughing for the next ten years. His name was Malik, and neither of us guessed that years later, he would be the Secretary General, the highest boss of all. Oh we were pals! We got along like two birds singing on a branch.

Malik was a Muslim of course: Most Egyptians are. So was I, but need I tell you, I was still a Muslim in secret. Absolute secrecy was required by the Shaykh. I did tell Malik I knew Arabic though, and I made him an inscription, saying Alhamdulillah (All praise and all gratitude belong to God). I insisted he put it up behind his desk, which meant I saw it all day from my desk, so I remembered to praise and thank God for that job, found by angels.

We had many windows, looking down into a small park, full of tilleul trees. Those have a fine scent and large, slightly greenish-white flowers, in big clusters; and a part of the flower, makes quite a calming herb tea. It was a delightful room; Malik was a treasure; and I brought plants into our office. One plant grew and grew—gracefully covering all the sides and the top of our wide windows.

Once a colleague told me that there had been a staff meeting on my day off, and a change had been announced: The Secretary General would be moving upstairs where Malik and I were then; and my office would be in a certain room that had no window. My colleagues called it "The pickle-jar consumption room." So imagine! I walked right into the office of the Director of Administration, and resigned. Astonished, he asked why? I said he ought to know why, and that I'd never work in that new office I'd been assigned to. Oh dear!

That had been a joke! The colleague who had made the joke was a Muslim; he knew how I loved our office space, and he knew exactly how to get my goat too. I could have left my job due to his joking; but lying is abhorrent in Islam. It is *even* strictly forbidden in joking.

Later, I almost followed an impressive Shaykh, who lied in making a terrible joke, that could have broken the heart of his devoted wife. Although I'd been about to follow him, I changed my course straight away! That Shaykh had many qualities; but these days the world is full of people who have some degree of spiritual realization, and yet they retain faults of character, or do not know enough about Islam. Although such "guides" may say that one must absolutely follow certain sacred laws—they don't go to the trouble to find out what those laws are. There are so many false or faulty paths in the world today, that it's almost better to stay home and read scriptures that to even go looking for guidance "There's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip!". And I've seen a lot of them!

The Scout Organization sent me to Austria to buy library furnishings, then to France, England, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Belgium—practically every country in Europe to visit the Scout Associations' libraries, so I saw the world, while working (and not too hard). Scouting wasn't exactly my cup of tea; but it was a remarkably innocent place to work, compared to other offices—and thanks to Malik, it was fun too. No, it was funny; how could anyone have such a sense of humor? I'll never forget Malik. Without him I'd feel older today: Sometimes the strangest things make one younger and wiser. I wish I could share Malik with you all, because I love to be like a kitchen strainer. Those handy things don't retain much; they pass most everything on—and I like to share what I receive the way a kitchen strainer does.

One day Malik too, told me a lie as a joke. He said he'd had lunch with some people who'd known me in college; so now he "knew all the secrets" of my past life. Naturally, I assumed he'd heard I was a Muslim, so I had to tell him. Then the rascal admitted to having made up a story; but there we were, on more serious ground! Although he was extremely modernized, he did tell me one thing: In his pocket he kept a tiny Quran "for good luck." After a few more days with me though, he was back to being a Muslim. سبحان الله وبحمده (Glory be to God, and all praise is His). But I'll never see him again in this world: By the grapevine I heard that Malik died suddenly, a few years after we had worked together.

The world with a capital W

Once Malik and I had a big problem, together: A band of Socialist countries wanted to eliminate some words in the Scout Promise and Law. Every Boy and Girl Scout in the world has always sworn: "I promise to do my duty

to God..."—no matter where they lived or what was their religion! Since Malik was so intelligent and modern, the Secretary General put him in charge of the problem—having no idea that Malik would categorically refute every argument those Socialists came up with (and he got some behind the scenes help from me). Malik and I were in cahoots—trying to save a world full of young people from crossing God out of their leisure time.

Those people weren't *just* Socialists, they were also atheists, and they'd accept anything, but not God. Once they had an interview with Malik, while I was watching with one eye from my desk. (My other eye was working as usual: No one knew I could see). Would you accept this, they said: "I promise to do my duty to the World, with a capital W?" I almost laughed; but it wasn't funny: The Secretary General, who was the highest official in the whole organization, actually agreed with them! He was a Russian, named Lazslo Nagy. When he appointed Malik head of the Committee to study the matter, he knew how intelligent Malik was, and maybe he recognized that Malik was worldly; he was; but Laszlo Nagy had no idea how strong was Malik's intelligence regarding religion—and, maybe a little bit thanks to me, Malik realized the importance of belief in God, period. He was not just another Muslim trying to convert people to Islam. Although I've forgotten some of this, the Shaykh was telling me salient points too, and I was sharing those with Malik, "under the table." He became a tower of strength in defence of God! His faith had been weak until he played that joke on me, and found out I was a Muslim; so I saw grace in the whole situation—albeit Muslims should not tell lies as jokes. I'd meet that fault several times in a lifetime. Someone wise told me that everything happens for a purpose. Sometimes, that's hard to see at the moment when an event seems to hurt you; but I can tell you that—seen from old age—everything that once seems dreadful, becomes marvelous if one trusts in God.

Troubles, even in a job found by angels

When I had good ideas, while working at that World Scout Organization, I'd only tell Malik. Then he would present them as *his* brainstorms, so no one realized I had an idea above a doorknob. But something happened to me after many years there: I got bored, maybe ambitious, and started joining in the conversations on more serious things.

I also, quite as second nature, managed to tell our member organizations what a good, international library we had, and I published a few books, which just happened to be better than what anyone else had done. They were nothing to write home about; but there wasn't a lot of competition for talent there: Malik and I were about it!

In one year, I did more of a good public relations campaign for the library, than the PR Director had done for the whole Organization—so some big PR

Committee came and had a meeting with me. The alcoholic and incompetent Director of PR begged me to give him the credit, and I sure did—making it look as if all I'd accomplished had been due to his advice. (The poor fellow always had a bottle of something stashed away; and he was also a great waster—spending money on useless and ugly gadgets he dreamed of promoting to make a fortune).

Suddenly, there was a financial crisis. Each of us executives was invited into the office of the Secretary General, where we were each asked: What would we advise? Straight off, I said: "Just eliminate a non-essential department." Nobody knew it, but Malik was my "inside man": He used to tell me what was going on above my head, and that day, he told me they'd already decided to do what I'd suggested, so I appeared intelligent that day.

The next day, the Director of Public Relations was fired, *and I was told to move into his office*, on the spot, as Acting Director! From one second to the next, things started happening, and I started learning.

On the one hand I was thrust into the upper echelons of that dear, innocent organization, and oh dear: It wasn't really all that innocent! On the other hand, I had the time of my life: That job was so much fun! I knew exactly what to do by instinct, and every move I made was successful. (You know I like people; but for the first time, I had an "all-people" kind of job)!

We had received a letter from some "boat people," who were Scouts. They'd used some skills learned in Scouting to escape by boat from Viêtnam, in the most precarious circumstances, almost dying. Although the letter had been floating around for a month, no one had seen it as being anything significant. I sent it to the biggest newspaper, and the next day, it was in the headlines, and the kiosks had it featured too as their headline of the day. However, with a heavy heart, I had to write to the poor young people, who had landed, and really needed help. We couldn't help them financially, when they absolutely needed help. We couldn't even help ourselves. Eventually, they were taken care of by some other organization; but for us, as often happens, they were just great publicity—a very sad fact.

As the years passed, Malik and I saw more and more eye to eye. Knowing that I quite loved Maryam, the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Islam, he told me a story about his mother. She had covered him, Malik, who was then a baby, with a mosquito net, because there was a deadly plague, transmitted by mosquitoes, in Egypt. Malik was asleep in another room and his mother was at peace. Suddenly she heard a voice, telling her "I am Maryam, and you must go quickly to save your child." Malik's mother rushed to him, finding and killing a mosquito that was actually sitting on him: it had gotten through the net. So that was why Malik was there, living to tell me the story.

Then I told him about my friend, Sayyidah Sadduqah, who lived at the other end of the lake. She was a widow, raising a little girl, when she became

deathly ill. Her fever had reached the highest limit adults can survive; but no doctor knew what was wrong with her. She was so obviously dying, that it's a wonder they cared so much;, but every hour, she was tested for cancer in another organ. One night, she heard a voice, in her own language, French, saying, *"La Sainte Vierge fait aussi des miracles pour les musulmanes."* (The Blessed Virgin also performs miracles for Muslims). In the morning she was well. Years later, a good faqir married her, and that child grew up beautifully with two fine parents!

Another fateful promotion

Now they had made me *acting* Director; but they soon made me the real Director. That was quite another thing, and I was about to find out what the organization was really doing; and it was not at all honest. I hope it's not the same today; but I lost my temper royally. They were taking money from donor organizations, governments and I forget who, claiming that they were spending it in the developing countries. Really, they were using it in a last-ditch attempt to save the organization at home. I can't remember exactly what was going on, and I don't want to create more trouble than what's deserved; but most churches, religions, and do-good organizations have some money interests, politics, and ideological conflicts involved. One has to be careful before helping them. Or rather, one should give;; but keep one's eyes open.

Another thing that happened, when I was Director of Public Relations wasn't so funny either. I went in the conference room one day, and I'd gotten all the secretaries working to sort out mountains of photographs which had never been filed by subject. They were making piles and there was a big photograph that someone had put in the middle of the table. It was of a man,who looked like he was on the moon! I asked somebody what in the world that was. Remember, because I had read the book *Ramakrishna* by M., when I was at Harvard, I had stopped reading newspapers and watching TV. So, I had no idea what was in the news; but as a Director of Public Relations that was a really big handicap, even for the Scout Organization.

The picture was of John Glenn, who had gone to the moon and taken a Scout badge with him! Believe it or not, I had heard about going to the moon; but who did it? I was woefully ignorant, and in great disgrace for a few minutes. My cheeks must've turned pink; but everybody got over it, thank goodness. One reason was that no one there seemed intelligent or spunky, except Malik and me. My tremendous shortcomings didn't matter there. Guess why? It was a job found by angels.

Sins: Mine – even in a heaven on earth

Now another thing happened while I was working ten years at the World Organization of the Scout Movement: Alack alas, I fell madly in love and had an affair with a man. You see, I was living with John Murray, my legal husband, and I was married to the Shaykh in secret. And he was supposedly spending lots of time making love to me; but I wasn't "in love"; he was twice my age and he really couldn't make love to me. He used an illicit kind of sexuality in his love, which was only for him, and I didn't know it; but that's forbidden in Islam. I didn't feel married to anyone, and my whole situation seemed ambiguous. Latifeli was magnanimous, for the Shaykh's sake: She wanted him to be happy, no matter what; but she didn't really think of Hamideli and me as wives. It didn't help either that the Shaykh told me the secrets of Fuqara, who had what he called "esoteric adventures."

That faqir seemed to be an extremely secretive person who would never have breathed a word of anything; but 10 years later he was knocking on people's doors and telling them that I was the secret wife of the Shaykh. I don't know why, but for some reason he didn't tell them then, that he'd had an affair with me. It came out later, and was all over the world. He wrote about it online and he wrote things that I had supposedly told him about the Shaykh. He was exceedingly intelligent, and not exactly paranoid; but he had a clear paranoid personality disorder, and so like several people I've known in my life, he saw and heard things, didn't lie; but reported quite falsely. He just couldn't see things correctly, because there was something warped in his personality. And it's on the internet—the story of what "he said that I said" and such things. These days, whatever secret you think you have, ends up on the internet! He had an awfully obvious kind of megalomania, which made him certain of subjective impressions he had: That ruined his intelligence; but he also thought people were against him. Naturally, I thought I could cure him: That was part of "my downfall" too.

There was something else important about what happened to me. I was wondering if I could be friends with him at all. And I knew about opening the Quran, so I had opened it, asking if it was alright that I be friends with him on our daily journeys. I was thinking that I always felt like holding his hand, which was a problem. But when I opened the Quran, the verse I got was "We will withhold their hands from thee and your hands from them" or something like that. That occurs somewhere in the Quran concerning fighting with the Meccans. Well to me it meant that I had permission, and this would be innocent. It wasn't innocent at all; and I had a full-fledged affair with him. When it was over, I wept in repentance for 10 years and that's why I tell you later, about the dangers of opening the Quran in "fi'l ul-Quran". You absolutely have to be free of *wanting* God to say one thing or another to you, because if you really *want* to go astray, the Quran itself will lead you astray.

Finally: The verse I found in the Quran *actually meant that I should stay away from that man*. Wanting to believe the opposite, I interpreted it wrongly! That verse meant that God decreed that there should be no contact between that man and me; but full of other false "esoteric" ideas too, I ended up weeping during *khutbah*s (sermons) until finally telling the Shaykh, when it was long over. That man left the Tariqah, and now he's "all over" the internet, claiming to have had inside information, and to be a great expert. He did not know much, was awfully intelligent, but made a hodgepodge of bits of information and subjective impressions—albeit, he would *never lie!* Us humans are complex!

The dances of the world

Because the United Nations was in Geneva, Switzerland, there were international events there all the time; but what I remember most is the dances of the world. Our whole family and many of the disciples of the Shaykh would go to Geneva, and see Balinese dance, Hindu dance, African dance, Russian dance—all kinds of traditional dancing. One of the most beautiful was Balinese dance. In those days the Balinese dance was done only by very young girls and they were bare-breasted. Their headdress was very decorated and there they wore much jewelry, but they were naked from the waist up. It was sublime-seeming and extremely graceful. Bali and Kashmir are considered to be heavens on earth in this world and one certainly saw it in the dancing.

There was a man dancer named Mario, although male Balinese dancers are rare. Well, Sayyidah Latifah went up to Mario once in a restaurant. We were having dinner in a Japanese or a Thai restaurant after we had been to a Balinese dance. She saw Mario and some Balinese dancers sitting at a table, so she went over and told him how we had admired their beautiful dancing. Then she gave him a sandalwood fan, a very beautiful but simple carved fan that unfolds. He asked her if we were all going again the next night. She hadn't planned on it, but she said yes since he'd asked. She went again the next night, and Mario came out on the stage. The music was very beautiful and all of a sudden he whisked something out from behind his back and spread it out in the air. It was the sandalwood fan that Sayyidah Latifah had given him! She liked to tell this story about a noble and great Balinese dancer.

We also saw wild African dances of African women, again bare-breasted, wearing grass skirts, and dancing to vibrant rhythms and sometimes with comical interludes. The dancers were so ingenious and talented—all like great athletes, but with beauty and grace. We also saw great belly dancers, several times, in fine Greek restaurants and later at The World Showcase, in Disneyland, Florida. Anything beautiful, we could see, and all of those belly dancers were beautiful and showed amazing talent. The Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah

liked all gifts, and, of the fuqara, attractive and charismatic people were most welcomed. Those are not the ways of the Lord!

Once, when we lived in the US, I was as sad as could be: An old African American came, from New York City, where he worked in the subway system. I forget why, but his job was making him go gradually blind. He was poor, and had obviously come hoping to receive zakat, as most of the fuqara were wealthy. Since no one seemed to be acting, I took Latifeli aside and proposed giving him some gold that Hamideli had given me for my old age—and it was right upstairs. She said, "I don't want to attract that kind of person." Well, he was intelligent, like all the fuqara, but had no charm and was of rather an inferior class. In those days, I obeyed her; but I did not like that. I've prayed for him, and several others who quite needed help, ever since... well, whenever I remember them. They're probably all in heavenly states today, having passed away, all of them. "For those who love God, all things work together unto good." (Romans, 8:28).

Toledo, and the house of El Greco

Once the World Scout Organization sent me to Spain and, along with many other bored people, I sat through hours of lectures. Sitting next to me was a very fat man; but he looked sort of nice. After all the conferences were out of the way, we were taken to Toledo, a lovely small city which has a mosque, a church and a synagogue. Everything is traditional, and there are beautiful old buildings, including the house of the artist El Greco.

When I went into that house, my heart melted seeing the beauty of everything; even the stairs going up into the house were decorated. Everything one used, that you'd think of as just being a tool, was beautiful. That fat man was somewhere near me, and he didn't look well at all. I inquired; but he said: "No, I'm fine. I'm just very moved at the beauty of this place." I was astonished, as I had thought no one was sensitive to beauty but me. So, being impressed by him, I sat next to him at dinner and he told me that he was a sculptor and he would show me his greatest works. I became interested, as, out of his pocket he took some photographs of his sculptures. They were perfect horrors, reminding me of Salvador Dali, who must have been possessed by some bad spirit; but for some reason that man had loved a traditional house as much as I had. I've never forgotten that house, or Toledo. For one thing, I loved the town because I love goodwill between different religions. It seemed very sweet to me that there should be a mosque, a synagogue and a church in one little town. That's quite my cup of tea.

On another trip, they sent me to Denmark for a conference of directors of public relations of different Scout organizations. Flying over Denmark was very strange. To my astonishment, the whole country was flat as a pancake! I

didn't see any bump, mountain or hill, anywhere. I had no idea that there was a country like that, and found it distressing. Finally, I saw a little mound up ahead and was looking forward to our flying near it; but when we got there I found it to be a building! The Danes have their charms, but a flat country is not for me!

When we were there—I don't know how it is now, it was a Socialist country—and I had to share a room with a lady. I knew her ideas were not my ideas. She was an atheist and I was on the top bunk while she was on the bottom. Somehow, I had to manage to say my prayer interiorly and I sure was nervous. It all turned out fine; but I quite noticed being in a Socialist country. One thing about it was that everyone in the country had to live as a handicapped person. All their money, all their restrooms, their buildings were designed for the handicapped. Afterwards I told the Shaykh about this and he said that it was a wrong idea, making everyone in the world participate in the destiny of those who were not blessed with good health. Now I understand that. If we obey God's laws, and are patient and grateful, while being tested by an illness, a catastrophe or a tragedy, then He rewards us beyond our imagination. Accepting God's Will, whatever that may be, leads to nothing but endless grace.

The Annabelian rebellion

Once, for a few weeks, all the men in the office were away. There was a World Jamboree in another country; so I was in charge of the whole office, which meant that I was in charge of all the secretaries. Being quite rambunctious, I gave them plenty of work. And when they ran out of work, I had them clean the elevator, or straighten up the place, perform lower tasks, whereas they'd been looking forward to a vacation when their bosses were away. They did not like my telling them to do any old job that needed doing, and thought their duties were only lofty ones—like typing; but there was hardly any typing to do.

After a few days, the head of the secretaries, named Annabelle, came to me and said: "Maudie, your reputation is at an all-time low. All the secretaries are complaining about you. This one is saying that, and the other one is saying this; you should call them all into the conference room tomorrow morning and ask them what is the matter with you, and apologize."

I got on the train to go home that night, feeling depressed and thinking: "Oh dear, what's the matter with me? I'll have to face whatever is the matter right now." Then I started thinking about what she had said about each girl, and I realized that there was some kind of a rebellion. It was like something that you read about in history. I'm no historian; but it was a revolt of the secretaries against executives. I didn't have words for it, but I went in the next morning and didn't do what Annabelle had suggested. That wasn't fair for me

to be sitting there with a crowd of young ladies, all of whom were against me. I called them into my office, one by one, and faced them one at a time.

The first one came in and I asked her what she was complaining about. She was a translator and I had criticized her translations into English. She had graduated from a translating school, and she was a professional; but she was Vietnamese, and her mother tongue for some reason was French. She was doing final translations into English.

I said, "Look, didn't they teach you in translating school that every final translation must be done by someone who has that language as a mother tongue?"

She said, "Yes."

"Well, English isn't your mother tongue, that's why you're not perfect in English. I'm not criticizing you as a person or anything, I'm just saying what's a fact—that you cannot make the final translation into a language other than your mother tongue. Now, am I right?"

"Yes."

"Is there anything else wrong between us?"

"No."

"So, can we just go back to being friends and colleagues?"

"Yes."

That ended with goodwill; but she knew I wasn't a doormat.

I said goodbye to that one and then came the next one. That one I'd criticized because she couldn't divide words at the end of the line, and she was a typist. I asked her if her boss hadn't criticized her for the same thing. She said: "Never". Her boss didn't know how to divide words. She didn't even know how to divide them, and she wasn't careful enough to look up words in the dictionary either.

I told her, "You have to either know how to divide a word, or you have to look it up in the dictionary. And if you don't become a good secretary, you'll never get a job anywhere except here. You understand?"

She understood. So I said, "Is there anything else left between us?"

"No."

"So, let's just go back to being friends and colleagues."

I left her and took the next one, until and I'd finished with the whole bunch; but it brought out something in me, and it taught me something too. Who knows whether he's a doormat or not, until somebody tries to walk on him!

Now, even more interesting, was that I'm a white person and the executives in the office were of all colors. One was as black as coal from Senegal, and one was tannish from the Philippines or Indonesia; but the only African-American was Annabelle, the Head of the Secretarial Staff. I adore Africans, period. I have an affinity with them, and in my mind the African-Americans are the

best-hearted and most spiritually available people in my country. But everybody can get complexes. It's usually us white people, who have superiority complexes; but Annabelle had some kind of a problem. She wanted to lead a rebellion of the people, of the subordinates, against their superiors in hierarchy; so she had set all those girls up to this Annabelian rebellian, by making little insidious remarks.

I realized all that later and it gave me a clue about some things that happen in politics, even though I'd stopped reading newspapers and listening to the news decades before that. I knew nothing about what happened in the world and that, you can believe it, became very difficult when I became Director of Public Relations. All of a sudden, I was expected to know things.

Soon after the Annabelian rebellion, things got worse and worse for me as the Director of Public Relations. I was finding out too many shady things, whereas I'd been happy when I was, so to speak "in the dark." After that fateful promotion, I had to be involved in some kind of politics—not exactly that. I don't know what to call it; but I was feeling that I could not honestly say such good things about an organization I didn't entirely believe in anymore. Malik was there, yes; and he almost understood me; but he was tougher. It was time for me to go. For ten years I'd worked there, and I'd looked out on the park full of flowering tilleul trees: That was a heavenly job I'd had.

At the same time, while I was coming to feel ill due to the finances and politics in that job, the Shaykh was getting his heart set on moving to the United States. That seemed impossible; but a clever lawyer-faqir, named Sidi Xyz, who would play a big role in my life, wrapped everything up so beautifully, that soon, we were all moving to my home country! The US was also the home country of the Perrys; but all in all, we were 16 people and one cat, to leave Switzerland for a new land, the land I'd left forever, fifteen years earlier. The Quran says:"Man never knows in what land he will die," and one can be surprised umpteen times when one thinks one knows. "Sammy" used to say: "I used to know I knew I knew; but now I must confess: The more I know, I know I know, I know I know the less!"

PROOF

Chapter 10
The Double Rainbow Over Lake Geneva

"It takes sunshine and rain to make a rainbow. There would be no rainbows without sunshine and rain."

Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

Leaving the heaven on earth

There was a transition period between our living in Switzerland, and in Bloomington, Indiana. It was symbolized by a splendid double rainbow on the day we left. That seemed to be shining from one world to another, and had some deep significance regarding the role of the Shaykh; but I've forgotten his interpretation. Inside of me, there was a totally different kind of transition. I was still living in a heaven on earth; there were many flowers, but a lot of thistles were appearing in my heavenly garden—not that I pulled any up: No, I kept storing them in the back of my mind.

As we were preparing to leave, all kinds of things happened, evolved, broke loose or became clear. Some hearts seemed broken: The one that mattered most to me was the heart of precious Lucie Von Dechend, who was old and alone. She had known the Shaykh from childhood, and remained a faithful, deeply devoted disciple, in spite of the fact that she knew and had witnessed enough to make her lose her faith in him. She had passed every test—always becoming more humble, good and pious, absolutely submitted to God and to her spiritual master. Today I realize that some of those who could not go with

us, like her, were blessed. They would have had soul-wrenching trials, as the sinful nature of the Shaykh would become manifest in the United States. In Switzerland, he was only known in a close inner circle, and everyone in that circle thought he was an Avataric phenomenon, beyond reproach. (Actually, I think everyone who migrated with us left the Tariqah)!

Titus Burckhardt too: He had become angelic in submitting to the Shaykh over a lifetime, or maybe he was a born angel. Several European fuqara also had saintly deaths before we left—all attributed to the greatness of Frithjof Schuon. Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Leo Schaya—all faithful and close disciples, had infinitely better characters than their Shaykh, but were they ever taken in! And my great Professor was to prove disappointing: He is still nonetheless great, but not perfect in character, and no true master, although God knows best.

Leo Schaya died heartbroken, soon before we left; but not *because* we were leaving: The Shaykh had broken his heart. Leo Schaya had been his best friend from childhood; and he was the one who used to loan his wife to the Shaykh for all-night "rendezvous," before any of us "extra" wives were on the horizon. That faqir, named Sidi Abdul Quddus in Islam, was sheer spirit. When he talked, it was as if God were there; but he was also kind, humble and human: We all loved him. How and why, who knows; but although he was a totally submitted faqir, before his latter days, he once said, "He's a sacred animal! What do you expect?" That was about his master's love for women! Alas, when I first heard that, I thought Sidi Abdul Quddus was crude.

As a young man, Sidi Abdul Quddus had married a woman who didn't like him, so eventually they divorced; but meanwhile he used to loan her to the Shaykh, who adored her and suffered unbearably when he had to leave her. Later, when he had Sayyidah Hamidah, he called the wife of Sidi Abdul Quddus "an historic friend!" That made her very mad; but I think she and her second husband remained faithful lifelong. Whatever he did, no one batted an eye: The Tariqah was extra-moral, or supra-moral, or maybe amoral—whatever means being *above* moral concepts. That's absolutely against Islam and God's words in the Quran; but Frithjof Schuon had not founded the Tariqah upon Islam. It was based upon his "genial idea" of pure metaphysics, and supra-moralism, which freed the Shaykh from being bound by any of the rules decreed by God. In the Quran, God says, "I decree what pleaseth Me!" By various means, our "Shaykh" identified his "me" with God's. (Ay ay ay: I just realized what that meant! This is infinitely worse than any "thistle:" He made himself God)!

Before we all left Switzerland, Sidi Abdul Quddus, the Shaykh's closest friend, wrote a book about the Absolute. Due to that book, the Shaykh tore him apart. I'm far from knowing the details, but he told me that his friend was gargling with words. After Sidi Abdul Quddus died, his widow begged for help from charity money, as she and their daughter had nothing to live on. The

Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah made fun of her, and didn't dream of helping her. That was one of several charity issues that upset me. Indeed they had a reason: His wife was not normal, in that she was a nymphomaniac and embarrassing to have around—just a handicap like another, I thought. She must have been born with an imbalance of hormones or something. I'd have taken that, and plenty of other faults with a grain of salt, if my best friend left a helpless widow.

It had seemed impossible to get the Shaykh a permit to live in the US, until the great lawyer-faqir Xyz appeared: He made everything marvelously easy for the whole "family." Soon after he took over, Sayyidah Latifah looked in her savings box: There was a fortune in there! She and the Shaykh were extremely well-to-do, so she generously paid for Sidi Abdul Ali and me to move to the States, along with many of our possessions.

In those days, everyone did things for me and Sidi Abdul Ali, because it was obvious that the Shaykh loved and admired me. As for those in the family, they realized the Shaykh needed me for his happiness; and we all revolved around him—whether we were first or last. We never had squabbles in front of him either. If one of us had a problem, we resolved that among ourselves, *because* we all considered the Shaykh to be a delicate treasure, to be kept well and happy no matter what our sacrifices were. That did none of *us* any harm, only him.

The situation was good for our souls. Since we believed in him, we had to get along, and get along we did! We seemed to be a happy, harmonious family. Even the two ex-husbands knew when to let their former wives leave their homes, for the sake of the Master. Others only knew that he said I had a perfect character, so they paid homage to me, some really very sweetly, but others in sleazy ways.

I'm still furious when I remember some things: One faqir (now a Shaykh!) gave me a beautiful thing. Then when I became too poor to survive, my father and I had a yard sale—selling all we had except our beds, my Quran, and... Well, that faqir bought back his gift; so he got something for his contribution to my well-being, which made me hopping mad. I would have just given me a donation, or bought other things. He also paid his best friend's daughter to help with housework, because his friend was poor. Again, I got to hopping! If my best friend were poor, I'd share what I had with him, before thinking about anything else. That buying back a gift is against the Sunnah too. I actually like that man, and admire him for telling the truth once; but I sure would hesitate to think he's a Shaykh!

Just before our departure, we all lined up for a family photograph. There I was, when a thistle crept into my mind: They were all wealthy; but I had no security whatsoever. Sidi Abdul Ali had retired, so we had a little Social Security; but not enough to live on. Although I'd become grumpy at The World Scout Organization, I had the ideal job, and with Malik's help, I could have

worked things out. He was a great friend, for me and for the Lord: May God have mercy upon Malik.

Well, remember what I did when I thought the lying German was lying to me? I headed for a phone booth to make a call to find out whether he was lying or not; but halfway there, I stopped myself: "No I must have faith in my guide!" Well, on this day too, I decided to trust in the Shaykh: He would see to it that I'd be taken care of until the end of my life. If anything happened, it would be impossible to find a reasonably good job after retiring, especially at my age, forty-five. I had no idea; but I was going to be *poor for 30 years* (!) and have to do housework for a living (but God gave me remarkable compensations at each stage). I don't regret it at all.

Now I've told you ten times over, what a genius Frithjof Schuon was. The trouble is that I myself am not smart enough to explain how he used his genius to climb so high as to be beyond morality, and to be infallible, the king of the world, a manifestation of Jesus Christ, the Seal of the Sages... and finally a universal sage, or *the* Universal Sage, because he told us wives that he was the *Seal* of the Sages. A Seal, in Islam, is the final and best: He includes all who came before. Fine scholars *have been* intelligent enough though, and one of those is Gregory A. Lipton, who wrote *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*. I'm sorry, this is hard to follow; but not everyone can understand everything, and it's priceless:

> "... if there are multiple religions because of the ethnic diversity of humanity, then having an Arab prophet personified as the Logos would signify not only the superiority of the Islamic 'religious mythology' but also that of the Semitic Arabs. Yet, Schuon notes in the passage quoted from Gnosis earlier, that all 'claims to absoluteness and universality' from such religious mythologies are relative, while 'only pure metaphysics and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal.' Thus, Schuon's assignment of the Virgin to the supreme cosmic position qua mother of the prophets in tandem with his self-identification with Aryan metaphysical 'purity,' in essence makes her the mother of all of humanity and all races, thus positioning her—*and thereby Schuon*—as prior to and thus *above*, the limiting factors of race, authorizing him to take up the *self-determined* position of 'the human instrument for the manifestation of the Religio perennis at the end of time'—that is, the ultimate arbiter and interpreter of religious 'Truth' (with that capital 'T' as Cutsinger[53] himself asserts at the start of this chapter)." (*Rethinking Ibn Arabi*, by Gregory A. Lipton, p. 147)

The Shaykh was so important, in his own eyes, that if there were thunder and lightning, that was due to him. Every great natural event came due to him,

53 James Cutsinger, a saintly Christian defender of Frithjof Schuon, realized he had been wrong before he died.

and just as he criticized the Pope, he criticized Ibn Arabi and the greatest Sufi saints. What did I know? I just thought he was right!

He was born at five minutes to midnight, in such a thunderstorm that all the clocks stopped in Basel, his birthplace. As I recall, that meant he was appearing right near the end of the world: Its last gasps would be delayed due to his thundering Sword of Gnosis, due to his inspired genius for separating truth from falsehood, right from wrong. You know, some people *are* born like that: Grandiose. Or at least with a sense for grandiosity.

That voyage did have something double about it... more than what a double rainbow symbolizes. There was an apparently cool part on one side in Switzerland, and a hot spot yet to come in our new world. *Both* worlds were supremely beautiful; everything always was; but in Bloomington, Indiana, USA, the beauty would be more easily accessible. Actually, it was plain bare naked! We would soon have "Primordial evenings," in which the most charming young faqirat would be naked. There were naked retreats and a naked wedding too—all being modes of "sacred nudity." Those Primordial evenings are mentioned by several scandal-mongers online, but their accounts are all mixed up. I'm the only one who has been to those gatherings, and who talks—and there are umpteen statements online which are great extrapolations.[54]

We were on our way, flying over France, when the Shaykh became especially happy, to be so high and to be looking down upon his enemies. That meant the great Shaykh Mikhaïl Valsan, who had left the Tariqah, after writing him an extremely long and respectful letter, which René Guénon found "magistrale." That means a bit more than magnificent—as Valsan knew everything about the spiritual path, and he was ever so delicately teaching his own supposed "spiritual master."

We were all used to hearing Valsan mocked as the "technocrat of the invocation," or as the one who made a "Chinoiserie of the invocation." You see, the Chinese are known for their delicate and complicated works; so, being a genius, when Frithjof Schuon wanted to make fun of a Magnum Opus, he called it a job of "Chineserizing!" Few of us ever thought to read that letter by Valsan, and those who did had insufficient knowledge of Islam to judge right from wrong.

Well, during the trip, Sidi Xyz, met us somewhere, and took the final flight with us. I was slightly nervous, because I had left my ideal job and livelihood, whereas the other two wives owned their houses in our new country. Xyz had built a precious little house for Sidi Abdul Ali and me, because I was so well-loved; but on a whim of that lawyer, who kept our house in his name—I could be homeless. Unconsciously, knowing that I had so many "ideas" that he

54 I think those Primordial gatherings changed greatly after a Grand Jury Hearing in 1991. That's the reason people after me didn't find them as bad. Frithjof Schuon meditated upon the sexual parts of two young women in my day.

might not understand someday, I asked him over some airport dinner: "What will happen if I do something you don't approve of someday?" He answered: "Trust me! That won't happen!'" As usual, I confided in the Shaykh and told him what Xyz said, but that I only trust in God; and I wouldn't trust Sidi Xyz like God; he shouldn't talk like that: That's the talk of lawyers and slick businessmen, who can't be trusted as far as you can throw a stick! He agreed wholeheartedly and quipped something to the effect that Xyz made a great friend; but no one needed *him* as an enemy! (Fifteen years later, Xyz put me in jail for walking on the street that house was on)! He was some lawyer! I mean really great: He could prove anything, right or wrong! But he hadn't started out like that: When he was young, he was a dear: Intelligent, bright, reasonable, generous, and funny! In the end, when the Shaykh thought he had an enemy, he'd turn that enemy over to Sidi Xyz... and guess what? That's where I ended up, for not wanting to be married to him anymore—albeit, I still thought he was perfect. I tried so hard *not* to become an enemy; but the Shaykh forced me to recognize that he was bad. Even then, I kept relenting for decades!

In the plane Sayyidah Hamidah and I were sitting behind the seats of the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah and we were *all* extremely worried: How would he take this, being taken up in the air by such a machine, and feeling the motor humming underneath him? Doing that was beneath his dignity, and he had much blamed the Pope for flying. (Silly: I could blame all the heads of the world too; it's just never occurred to me... You try it: See what happens: Maybe people will think you're greater than the one you blame or maybe they'll call you a megalomaniac). Well, when the plane took off it was a little bit rough, the way it always is; but soon we were well above the earth and the plane calmed down. He took a very deep breath and said ألم نشرح لك صدرك from the Quran: "Have We not expanded thy breast?" He was feeling as if he could breathe *better* up in the air, seeing the earth so small beneath. He loved to be high! In every way!

Everything bloomed in Bloomington!

After what seemed like a week, we arrived in the United States at the airport in Indianapolis. Several disciples from Bloomington came to pick us up and take us in different cars to places to stay in Bloomington until our houses were finished. It was as hot as the fires of Hades. I'd never felt such heat in my life, but it was a good temperature for the Shaykh's lungs. He thrived there because he was prone to asthma, a kind of asthma that heat was good for. Being free of laws was also good for him. We all knew that.

After we got settled a little it became clear that our lives had flowered materially: Everything around us was perfect, artistic, comfortable and beautiful. His disciples in the United States were successful, strong and competent young

people. They gave away properties, transformed houses for us, and drove us places. It was as if the Tariqah had flowered on the whole plane of material existence.

A house was built for the Shaykh which was very beautiful. It didn't look pretentious on the outside but it was *so* fine inside! When the front door was open you could see all the way through the house by a very wide and long vestibule, which went to the back of the house, where there were big windows looking out into the woods. That was an amazingly original idea of Sayyidah Latifah's. In her bathroom was another original thing: Instead of having a mirror over the sink, she had designed a big window, made of pine wood, so she saw out into the woods even from there. They lived on 40 acres of land that they had been given by one or more of the wealthy disciples there. Actually, she's still there, as of today... in 2019: She is still alive at age 94! I loved her so much that my heart beats faster when I remember her; however... well, you'll see.

PROOF

Chapter 11
The Egg or The Shell?

"Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The shadow is what we think it is and the tree is the real thing."

Abraham Lincoln

The time has come to talk about the insides and the outsides of things—not that I knew the difference back then. Everything was so perfect in Bloomington. My (still legal) husband and I were the only ones who weren't well-to-do; but Xyz owned a big company and had an enormous property with a kind of a garage or a barn on it, that he had transformed into a lovely little Japanese-style house for us. Its roof looked Japanese from the outside, and inside it was perfectly adequate for us and it was a Japanese (!) jewel in every way. The first night that we lived there, both Sidi Abdul Ali and I got up in the middle of the night, feeling in love, and just wanting to marvel, hear the crickets chirp, and admire this wonderful place that we had been given to live in. I went into the living room in the dark of night, and there *he* was—sitting happily in the dark.

The crickets sang all night, and during the day one could walk through endless woods and meadows, and by streams. Everything was inimitably beautiful. At sunset, the hills took on different shades, and there were paths for the one family who owned horses. In the woods were many varieties of wildflowers: Blue-eyed grass, rose pinks, lilies of the valley and a dozen kinds of other, tiny white flowers.

Bloomington, Indiana is a wonderful place—I think the most beautiful place I've ever lived in. It was blessed, materially blessed, like the United States is. That doesn't necessarily speak for its spiritual self at all; but materially, and

in natural beauty, it sure is a blessed town, and I'd love to live there again. Although a hadith says, "The only real life is the life of the hereafter," some experiences here below give us hints of what eternal life can be like.

In the autumn, Bloomington was rich in maple trees of all different types. Once Latifeli saw one, all illuminated by sunlight. She said it was "happiness in the form of a tree." It was a splendor; and in the spring, wherever you went, there were many magnolia trees in bloom—in white and in all shades of pink and purple. When I would go for walks in the woods with Sayyidah Badriyyah, there would be dozens and dozens of kinds of wildflowers. We had a whole book on American wildflowers and most of them were around us. Some I transplanted and put in my garden and whenever we wanted anything, wealthy disciples would bring it for us.

Xyz was charming and generous. When a faqirah noticed that I didn't have enough kitchen cupboard space, within days, carpenters arrived: I had new cupboards and drawers of a lovely natural pine. Afraid I'd ruin such fine things with a drop of water, I looked at him, helpless: "What if I get some water in this drawer by mistake?" "Then you'll have a wet drawer!" he answered, and I laughed loudly!

Trees are used to water: I wasn't used to such fine natural things; but he was competent for *everything*: Law, business, architecture, generosity, and humor too. While Sidi Abdul Ali seemed to have a Japanese soul, Xyz was/is decidedly an American Indian. He still exists, and I never give up hope: That's why he's getting away with an obvious pseudonym; but that's no honor. Real people tell the truth, and don't need hiding. Still, I'm fond of that fellow!

He was so rich that he had gold buried under his stepping stones and behind the electric sockets in his house, and he left his basement open, so I could use, take, borrow whatever he had (but I didn't like that; I wanted walls and doors between us). Still, whatever we wanted would appear, due to him. Later he wouldn't allow me to come back and take care of Sidi Abdul Ali, who had an illness after we separated. I'd intended to take care of him for the rest of his life.

Once he was telling us how clever he was in practising law. Neither he nor his law partner could be convicted of perjury, because they had a trick of hiding papers from one another, knowing what was on them. It was some slick trick: He was no fool, but not an honest man either. Dionysius the Cynic used to walk around in the daytime with a lantern. When asked why, he said that he was looking for an honest man. If he'd had the sun itself, he couldn't have found Xyz; but God forgive him: I hope he's changed.

There was also a new Na'ib there—a really efficacious one. My legal husband, Sidi Abdul Ali, had been the only Na'ib in Bloomington, but he was only a Na'ib due to his age, intelligence and sobriety. Now there was another one, named Sidi Junaid. He was an attractive, charismatic young man—talented,

musical, and spiritually gifted to end everything! He could also govern the whole society. Latifeli adored him and still keeps in touch with him—albeit he was sort of "lynched" by the fuqara.

Sundance music

I think the new Na'ib was the one who started it: We had *the* most dramatic, powerful and incredible *hadrah*s (ritual remembering of God) outside, in nature—behind the Shaykh's house with woods all around us. Sidi Junaid led these events, beating upon a large drum. The music was, astonishingly, the Sundance drum music of an American Indian tribe. The combination of Truth in the meanings of our invocations, with Indian music and the natural surroundings... all that together made a tremendous impression upon one's soul. It was more moving than witnessing a Sundance, and that's quite something. The plenteous greenery... the profundity, the power... it was beyond description!

Now I'm talking to you all; but there are many of you: Some of you will need and understand this part. Others... well, pass on ahead. This is for highly intellectual people, Muslims who need to know about Sufism, or people of any faith who have to get to the bottom of things: Whitall Perry, that is Sidi Abdul Qayyum, our family member, the Shaykh's doorkeeper, and the ex-husband of my second sister-wife... he began to protest! But that was only the beginning: He kept on protesting for years—I think until he got Alzheimer's disease, and then died. And he was only the first; there would be many. After a while protest seemed to grow on trees. Most people exaggerated though. If they hadn't exaggerated so much as to be unbelievable, everything would have turned out differently. The problem was that the Shaykh was mixing religious forms, in this case Islamic and American Indian; but he always mixed forms. That leads to the unleashing of forces one cannot understand or stop. Now I'm not at all sure; but I think one example of the unleashing, was the proliferation of scandal-mongers, who disgraced the Tariqah online, and in books. Their reports, often claiming me as the authority, were ridiculous extrapolations, with grains of truth and some brilliant deductions. The Shaykh would be accused of performing black magic, sexual alchemy, bizarre Tantrism, weird Native American ritual dances, and I don't remember what all.

The Perrys had lived in Egypt before moving to Switzerland, where they lived next door to the Shaykh. They had gone to Egypt to learn from the Gnostic Sufi master, Shaykh Yahya Abdul-Wahid, who is well-known for his prodigious writings, under his given name, René Guénon. It also happens that he was a great saint. Maybe not everyone realized that; but *he* was the Great Man. His student, Frithjof Schuon, had impressed him in the beginning; but finally he denounced his former pupil, loud and clear. Then Frithjof Schuon

partially denounced *him*, and claimed to have surpassed him. There are many opinions: Some saying one should not exaggerate the differences between the two men, not make a cult around Guénon, etc. Well Guénon was a great Gnostic saint, and Frithjof Schuon was a megalomaniac and a heretic. How could one "exaggerate" about that?

PROOF

Chapter 12
The Return of Sammy

"Do you wish to find out the really sublime?
Repeat the Lord's Prayer."

Napoleon Bonaparte

The Lord's Prayer

My father Sammy was beginning to believe, only when he was 75 years old. And it came about in a strange way. I was still living in Switzerland and my father lived in the US; but we were planning to move there—the Shaykh, Sayyidah Latifah, myself, my legal husband Sidi Abdul Ali and the Qayyumids—we were all going to move with some 16 disciples of the Shaykh and one cat. But I was worried about my father, and afraid he'd die as an atheist. So I made one last desperate attempt to make him believe. With much help from the Shaykh, I wrote him a fantastic letter, practically begging him to pray, and explaining all the reasons for it. I told him: "Just say the Lord's prayer, many times a day, *please.*" I gave reasons. Say the Lord's prayer many times a day that's *all* you have to do. Well I sent this magnum opus; and it was a thick letter.

Several weeks passed and I got a reply! The Shaykh, Latifeli and the Qayyumids just happened to be at our house, so I read them the letter from my father which was too special! Everything he did was charming. He said, very mysteriously, "'I walked down the street and into the Christian Science reading room. Then I went into the library and I asked them where it was; but nobody could find it. Nobody knew where it was, until finally, I took a Bible off the

shelf, opened it and found it in Matthew 6. From that moment until now I've been saying the Lord's Prayer, morning and night over and over again." I about wept; and the Shaykh and everybody there—everyone was happy that my father believed.

Months later we arrived in the US, and my father moved from California to Indiana to live near me again. He and I had our first visit: We sat and talked about the Lord's Prayer; but I was disappointed, shocked! He didn't believe in God! He was only saying the Lord's Prayer in order to be closer to me! I was heartbroken and went to tell the Shaykh, "My father doesn't even believe in God. He's only saying the Lord's Prayer in order to be closer to me!" Now the Shaykh really was an intelligent man, even about faith, and he solved many conundrums. He told me "Don't worry about it at all. Within the year, he will believe. The Lord's Prayer has an irresistible grace in it."

Before that year was up, my father was praying for all the poor, unfortunate people in the world. He never prayed for himself, but was praying for others. I made him a little rosary with thirty-three beads, a very charming thing. And for years, he said on it: يا مريم عليك السلام thirty-three times then he said يا الرحمن يا الرحيم thirty-three times, then he said "Allah" thirty-three times. Allah is the name of God in Arabic and for Muslims; but Allah is the name of God for Christians too, in all the Arabic-speaking countries in the world. So I don't think there was anything illegitimate about this rosary that the Shaykh had given him.

One day I took my dear father to see the Shaykh. That was a privilege for me, because the Shaykh loved me so much. He accepted to see my father; but I was embarrassed, because my father was sticking his neck out towards the Shaykh, like some kind of a goose! His eyes were staring and his neck was sticking out so far! I thought he wasn't polite, and I was really afraid that the Shaykh was going to be ill afterwards. Well, as we walked out of the room, my father took my hand. He said "Oh Maudie, he's so wonderful! I had no idea." And my heart was glad. Soon, he became a Christian disciple of the Shaykh's.

When I took my father home that day and came back to see the Shaykh, I was surprised. The Shaykh was looking all worried and was pacing up and down, wringing his hands, and saying "Amineli, Amineli." I said "What's the matter?" and I was very afraid my father had upset him. But he was worried that he hadn't been nice enough to my father, that he hadn't made a good impression! My heart was very touched by that. It was one of only two times that I saw him be humble in the least, and the other time was only humorous. He was nearly always like an emperor: Majestic, aloof, kingly-looking. Some years later, the Shaykh had Sidi Xyz tell my father that I had lied to him. I was never really his wife.

Banged over the beezer

A few times a year, my father was invited to tea at the Shaykh's house by the Shaykh and Latifeli. The Shaykh loved me so much he wanted everything to do with me to be around him. My father was also such an amusing person that he had both the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah in stitches during these teas.

Once we were taking my father home in the car (Sidi Abdul Qayyum used to be the Shaykh's driver; he and Latifeli never had a car). As we were driving along my father said, "I was afraid she'd bang me over the beezer with a bumbershoot." Somebody said, "What?" He repeated, "Bang me over the beezer with a bumbershoot. That means I was afraid that lady was going to hit me over the nose with her umbrella." The beezer means the nose, the bumbershoot is an umbrella and everybody in the car was in stitches. He was a character. Frances was normal in comparison; he was half dictionary and half a sackful of Mexican jumping beans.

However, my father and Sidi Abdul Ali did not get along very well. My husband was very Japanese, formal, and rather a stuffed-shirt—especially when my father was around. Once, my father wanted to kiss him and Sidi Abdul Ali just pushed him away. It practically made my father cry, and sometimes I thought this was not going to work at all. But we had beautiful Christmas celebrations; not Christian Christmases: The ancient primordial feast of light of the Germans—a primordial pagan feast. We had a beautiful live Christmas tree at the Shaykh's house with real candles on it, always beautifully decorated. We put our presents under the tree for one other, and our gift cards were always full of poetry and humour, because everyone was so brilliant.

One Christmas, there was a present from my father for Sidi Abdul Ali—my father wasn't there, but the present was. Sidi Abdul Ali opened up the present and the card said "Who is that man so elegant and *fine?* Why, it's that son-in-law of *mine.* Gosh, gee whizz and *golly,* it's Sidi Abdul *Ali!*" We all burst out laughing; but that was far from our aristocratic way of talking. The present was an ascot, a kind of necktie that men wear instead of neckties. Sidi Abdul Ali even liked it and laughed too.

PROOF

Chapter 13
My Dear Little Cabbage and All Her Dear Little Brussels Sprouts

"I love you with so much of my heart,
that none is left to protest.
William Shakespeare, Much Ado about Nothing.

A love like that of Jonathan and David

Soon after we moved to Bloomington, I happened to be sitting behind in a majlis. All of the women were praying up in front of me, and one of the young faqirat didn't know how to pray with the right movements. When she put her face down, she put all her cute little toes up in the air! It looked too funny; so after the prayer, I called her aside to explain. I got a good look at her face. That young lady was so adorable and naïve-looking! I didn't want to hurt her feelings about how she was praying; some people could be very upset, so I put my arm around her and called her "my dear little cabbage."[55] And I told her, "That's what women call their children in French, and I think in German too." Oh, she laughed about that! And when I saw her expressions, I saw a girl so full of qualities, talents, originality and imagination! I just saw *everything* in her face, and I loved her to death. Her name was Badriyyah, which means "full moon," and she was a radiant young woman, with very long, straight blonde

55 *"Mon cher petit chou"* is a term of endearment, usually used for children. It means "my dear little cream puff," or "my dear little cabbage."

hair. I told her, that new little cabbage of mine: "When you bow down, and you put your forehead and your nose and your hands and your knees and I don't know what on the floor, you're not supposed to put your dear little toes up in the air. You're supposed to put them like this and like that." So she took note of all that; but somehow in the conversation we'd become friends—albeit I was 15 years her senior and could almost have been her mother.

She asked me if I wanted to go for a walk the next weekend. So indeed, we went for a walk; and then for another walk... and we told one another all we'd learned, seen and done in our lives. Every weekend, when she wasn't working, we walked for miles and she taught me all kinds of wonderful things about nature. She was a natural, nature-loving person who had never really gotten used to cities. She'd show me things like the fur of a deer under a bush and then tell me that she knew there were deer that lived around there. Then a little further on we would see a deer.

Once we saw a doe with her fawn. Well, the mother made a certain sound that deer make, and she ran off telling the baby deer to follow her. But her fawn was confused, and he ran the other way, which meant that he ran right into her and me! It was so adorable to have a baby deer run right into us... soft, naïve, and so young. Then he saw his mother's white tail flashing as the white-tailed deer do, and he ran off after her.

Another time we couldn't get through the forest because the thorns had all come out on the bushes, so she took me through a stream. We got some rubber slippers and walked on the rocks through the stream, with the briars overhead and beside us, until we came out where she wanted us to. And she told me that she had a friend there, a black dog. And he was very humble. I would meet him. So we came out of the other end of the steam and there was her friend, the black dog. He got down on his chest, not daring to stand up in front of us, and his tail was wagging a mile a minute—happy to see her and me, and wanting to be included. He crawled all the way over to us on his chest, not daring to stand up out of humility. It was such a sweet thing that I've never forgotten it.

We had so many adventures and we'd come home with our hands full of wildflowers or autumn leaves. We became closer and closer all the time, and I started teaching her everything I knew about everything. She hadn't been to college; she'd only been to an art school, so I taught her what I'd learned in college. I taught her about every book I'd ever read, and everything I'd learned in life, and from the Shaykh. We became as close as two peas in a pod. She was the dearest friend I've ever had in my life. I thought we were like Jonathan and David in the Bible. Indeed, it's very unusual for two women to be as close as we were. A man and his wife are close. Mothers and fathers may be extremely close with their children; but she and I were just as close as any two people can be as friends.

One day, she made herself an Indian dress, that had only fringes on the top, so her breasts showed through the fringes. With her husband's permission, she showed herself to the Shaykh like that. Afterwards, she and her husband were at our house for lunch, with the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah. That was one of the rare times I noticed an "un-detached" (I mean sexual) air about the Shaykh as he explained the metaphysical symbolism of that dress to her husband, who was a perfectly devoted faqir. A few months later, Sayyidah Badriyyah would be divorcing him.

Well, even before that day, we all knew she was going to become the fourth wife of the Shaykh, and I was absolutely delighted. I was teaching her, training her, telling her what he was like in every way; and before I knew it she was in our family.

Her husband had adored her and was absolutely shocked when she said she didn't want him to make love to her. She told him that she just couldn't make love anymore, because she had had an esoteric vision: The Divine Name was entering her upwards through her private parts. (Actually, she had also heard the name of the Shaykh repeated over and over at the same time; but I don't think she told anyone that for a long time). Her husband wept; and after he'd suffered and suffered, I suggested that he go for a walk with the dear young faqirah who had divorced her husband, the great Na'ib of the Tariqah, who had an affair with an underage girl. He went for a walk with her, and built a pile of autumn leaves for her to lie down on. They he very tentatively took her hand, and... well, it was just a lovely story. He married her, and had an absolutely perfect marriage: A compensation for his loss. Moreover, his new wife loved Badriyyeli, and that couple remained close to Badriyyeli until she died. Anyway, my precious dear little cabbage was my new sister-wife. The Shaykh and I didn't tell Latifeli or Hamideli; but she and I had an especially close, idyllically magnanimous threesome relationship: We didn't want them to feel left out.

Pumeli: Dear little Puma

Sidi Abdul Ali, my legal husband, lived in books, and did not want to be bothered by anything. So, even after ten years of our living together, he hadn't let me have a cat. His study had bookcases in it from the floor to the ceiling. There were books under the stairs, and behind the dishes in our cupboards. I'd no hope of ever having a cat.

But one bright day, I got a phone call: a friend, who had nine cats, had just found out that her husband was allergic to them. Why nine? She explained that they lived in the country. Some way away was a road. People would drive by there, and dump out their unwanted cats, to starve, be eaten by foxes, or goodness knows what. But her cat, Pumeli (dear little puma) would see a

strange cat, touch noses with it, and then head for his garage, where his food and water dishes were. Only once had my friend seen this; but she finally had eight adopted cats, who were free to come and go from her garage, where she kept ever bigger bowls of food and water.

Her husband was a photographer, and his darkroom was in the back of that garage; but they'd found out that he was allergic to—of all things—cats! To date, she'd found homes for all the eight cats Pumeli had saved; but she wanted a special home for Pumeli (and I was known as a cat-lover). Well, she told me more about how remarkable he was in character—so I pleaded with Sidi Abdul Ali. Finally, he said: "All right; but that cat may absolutely *not set foot in my study!*"

Exhilarated, I went with a friend (the daughter of "the man at the top of the stairs," Sarah de Meyenbourg) to fetch him. Oh dear! I was disappointed! He was grey; I don't like anything grey; he only had a few stripes; one leg was slightly crooked, and he was eight years old (about 65, in human terms), so he wouldn't be with us long. But this was the cat my Lord had given me; and I never look a gift horse in the mouth.

He came up and touched noses with his mistress. Then he said a polite "mrow-greetings" to my friend and me.

The whole way home, he sat on Sarah's lap, purring, and looking out the window. We went in the door, and my husband (well, really I was married to the Shaykh; but I lived with Sidi Abdul Ali) was right there. Maybe he was curious; I didn't know.

Pumeli walked in with great dignity; said quite a polite "mrow-greetings" to my husband, and then turned to explore the study. I ran to grab him, very worried; but Sidi Abdul Ali said: "No, it's all right. This cat is different." And indeed he was! I didn't realize it then; however, both Pumeli and my husband were brahmins. They liked to contemplate, read and be quiet, not to chase or conquer anything.

From age two, I'd had cats; but I'd never even heard of one like Pumeli. In the several years he was with us, he didn't catch a single thing. All he wanted was to keep us company—and he especially loved to be there when my husband was praying and reading.

In pain that first day, as he'd had a tooth pulled, he dragged himself off behind a curtain. But when we started talking, he came slowly out, washed our hands, and sat down to get acquainted and participate. From then on, he did that every time he heard us talking. When he went into a room, he always said "mrow," and he dutifully washed all our guests.

Since he seemed so fatherly, I was curious to see how he'd behave with a kitten. Some neighbours had a litter of them in a woodpile, along with a litter of raccoons, and they all ate cat food together; so I pleaded and just barely got permission to borrow a kitten for 24 hours.

Pumeli touched noses with it; but then, to my disappointment, he let it play alone. After a while it got lost though, and was meowing. While I watched, Pumeli ran right up, touched noses, and then led it out—just the way he'd saved the eight abandoned cats!

They must have slept together upstairs, behind a curtain; but Sidi Abdul Ali, the first one up, told me the rest. He always had breakfast right near the bottom of the stairs. And each morning, he'd hear Pumeli hopping down. Before seeing my husband, Pumeli always said "mrow." But that day there was no sound; so, being curious, my husband looked up the stairway. Pumeli was hopping down all right; but he was carrying the kitten in his mouth! While Sidi Abdul Ali watched, Pumeli carried it to his food dishes, dropped it down, gave it a lick, and started eating! The kitten copied him. But that morning, alas! "Our" kitten had to go home to his woodpile, full of siblings and little raccoons!

One day, I had a depressed visitor. She'd say things like: "Nobody loves me; I have no friends," etcetera; so I'd say that I was her friend, I'd help, and so on. But she never said: "Oh how nice!" or "Thank you." When she left, I felt discombobulated, so I went into the study to talk to my husband. There was Pumeli, keeping him company, by sleeping on a couch. Since he had become deaf, he didn't look up and greet me when I came in; but when the sofa shook under my weight, he looked up and said "mrow." Naturally, I gave him a pat. He said "mrow-thank you." (I know cat language). So I gave him another one; and he thanked me again. Wondering how many times he'd do that, I counted: *13 times,* he thanked me, just for a little pat!

All good things come to an end, and thus did Pumeli. Alas! He died! I had a big piece of grey karakul fur that my dearest friend, the fourth wife, had given me. Sidi Abdul Ali and I laid Pumeli on that. Then from our garden, we got lots of furry grey-green sage, which blended in with his colour. Last came many bright yellow, Icelandic poppies, which had just bloomed in our garden. All that we wrapped in white sheets; and we buried Pumeli in a corner of our garden, where he remains to this day—very near the houses of the "Shaykh" and the many fuqara, who had known our ever so precious cat.

It's rare that animals show as much virtue as did Pumeli; but history bears witness to notable exceptions, like the horse of the great saint, Khalid ibn al-Walid, who wept when his master died; and like the cat of Shemeel, who died of grief when her master left this world.

In Buddhism there's a story (in *The Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*) of Arjuna, who goes to heaven. With him is the noble and faithful dog who has helped him throughout his life in this world. When Arjuna is told that his dog has no place in heaven, he gives up the idea of going there, and turns away with his faithful companion. Then he receives the news: This was in reality the last in a lifetime of trials for him. He had passed them all; his noble dog was really

an angel; so they entered heaven together. "Heaven" had been testing Arjuna, as to whether he had a perfectly faithful heart.

For me, Pumeli played the role of an angel in disguise. His simple virtue prepared me for big shocks I'd soon meet: disappointments with the people I loved most.

If you and I meet in the next world, maybe we will go to visit Pumeli together. (And the people we loved most, if God wills. And may that include at least some of those we loved and lost, in the highways and byways of this world).

The evening I choose his successors

One evening, after we were all well-settled in the lovely town of Bloomington and Badriyyeli was in the family, everyone was at our little Japanese house. The Shaykh was telling us all how annoyed he was, with both Sidi Abu Bakr (Martin Lings) and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. They were acting like Shaykhs, teaching, and proud he thought: He did *not* like that!

We were all trying to think of what he could do, when I said, "Well, why don't you name them your successors now, and word it in such a way that they'll feel humiliated. In any case they will be your successors, won't they? There's hardly any other choice!" He really liked that idea, and so did everyone. In those days Badriyyeli was my apprentice—applauding my "genius." Seyyed Hossein Nasr had some great experience of grace after that, and again, after the Shaykh died; however, I'm afraid that he was not a legitimate Shaykh for any one of several definitive reasons. There are few true Shuyukh, especially in the Occident; and I think that all the great Turuq of the past have degenerate branches today. I only hesitate about that word "all;" but "most" is sure. That's why it's essential for Muslims to know that the Prophet will be their guide, if they cannot find a true Shaykh.

Well, then, the Shaykh did his naked dhikr dance (not really a dance—only simple movements) while we all admired him. Suddenly I heard a catfight outside, and jumped up to save Pumeli. He'd spent ages in veterinary clinics, because whenever he was bitten, he got severe infections. Badriyyeli made me sit back down and upbraided me for my lack of a sense of proportion. I disagreed—thinking Pumeli's having another serious infection was more important; but I put the incident with all the others in the back of my head.

Chapter 14
The Night of the Intrinsic Garlic (And Other Tales of a Damsel in Distress)

"Walking alone is not difficult; but when we have walked a mile worth a thousand years with someone, then coming back alone is what is difficult."

Faraaz Kazi

The naked angel

Once, Sayyidah Badriyyah and I were living in the Shaykh's house to take care of him, because Sayyidah Latifah was away visiting her sister. Come evening, she was upstairs with him, as usual, while I was downstairs, eagerly awaiting her coming down. She would always share something she'd learned with me, as these were her years of being his favorite. I had had mine, and I'd already shared all I could with her, since she was the apple of my eye. Actually, I loved her more than anyone I'd ever known in my life. As for why, that's easy to explain: She was an exceedingly loveable young woman. Her character seemed ideal: She was unimaginably magnanimous, generous, natural, naïve, intelligent, spunky, hard-working, competent in everything—and dripping with talent. She was a lovely, precious thing! Really! Any king should have wanted her as his queen, or at least as a concubine in his harem... if he had one of those.

That evening, she had everything in the world: *All* his love (he hardly talked about anyone else) and the most beautiful house I've ever seen, on forty acres of wild land, with streams, woods, wildflowers and paths. By that time, she was also the most loved person in our community. She had invented an astoundingly beautiful, original and sacred-seeming kind of dance, which she was performing naked, but in the most dignified, sacred manner. It was a riveting experience to see her, and I often wept due to the beauty of it. But everything she did was lovely, charming and simple. She had many of the qualities of Sayyidah Latifah, but with an added, indescribably feminine charm. If you think I'm exaggerating, all I can do is say that we had *all* fallen at her feet. It wasn't just me, and it was because she was his perfect soulmate, the embodiment of esoterism. We had *all* become her "dear little Brussels sprouts"—and I was the leader in Sproutism. Well no: He came first; but I came in a close second. For him, she was his personal embodiment of the highest esoterism, and that meant naked. Nudity was a symbol of esoterism for him: That was why he painted all holy people naked; and he had a penchant for showing himself naked too.

So there I was downstairs, in Sayyidah Latifah's bed. That was a nice place to be, as she had the best old-fashioned, white cotton sheets, ironed (!) and so comfortable! I was happily reading away, in a fine biography of Abraham Lincoln, and all in all, I was perfectly happy with the situation: She had everything I had had, but I was delighted with her as my sister-wife.

Hours passed and I heard them chattering a lot upstairs. That was not their habit. *Finally*, down she came! Oh my goodness! As seen by man or woman, she was the most lovely sight: A beautiful, naked young lady, with long blonde hair, perfumed with something I'd never dreamed existed, looking like an angel and yet naïvely human and as natural as can be.

She sat down by my bed and I was all ears: What would she tell me of the evening's wisdom? The angelic one spoke: "We have decided that you underestimate him,"

I said, "Oh! How so?"

"You think that his dislike of garlic is extrinsic, whereas its intrinsic," she replied. "There are other reasons, but that's the key one: Everything he does is intrinsic."

Well, I had no idea what I'd said about his dislike for garlic, nor could I fathom why everything had to be intrinsic; but that was her favorite word, and I was going to hear a lot about it. My common sense came to the fore. I said, "Nonsense!" and got right up and went upstairs.

"Sheikheli, how can I underestimate you? I think you're a door to Allah; your every word comes from Him!"

He would not answer, but looked a bit disconcerted. Not wanting to put him in the middle of what seemed to be a tiny dispute between wives, I only

greeted him with "Peace," and headed on down the stairs. It seemed like nothing; but halfway down, I realized that I was done for.

My heart was heavy: Together, they had put me into a position of spiritual inferiority. We all knew that the best people were those who realized his greatness. Now she was greatest in that respect too—quite in addition to all her other assets! As my father would have said: I was "flummoxed;" that's a rarely used word for outwitted, outdone, done in and done for! That night marked the beginning of the end! My heart was heavy already on the stairway as I walked down. What had just happened sounded like nothing, and I could not have explained why, but that night I knew I'd lost him, her and everyone around.

This conundrum was nowhere near as stupid as it sounds though. In a way, the conflict about his being intrinsic or extrinsic revealed everything I would discover over the next several decades. You see, he (and she and they) really thought that he was the Perfect Man. He had no "individual taste," so he didn't just "dislike" the smell of garlic. Everything about his "taste" or "opinion" was the same as God's. Muhammad was like that, and he did not eat garlic or onions because angels spoke to him; but as far as others went, he said "Eat!" so garlic, which is extremely healthy, is used all over the Muslim world, just not before going to a mosque. Muslims, you will understand this: Frithjof Schuon wanted to be the modern-day Prophet, whose every word and deed would become "Sunnah." Three of us wives were accepting that. For ages, I didn't realize what was going on with me; but finally I could not accept that. He also made his own inspirations equal to the Quran; I was just watching—and dreadfully confused. I needed someone to talk to; to reassure me. The heavenly sides were so lovely, the walks in nature, the traditional beauty, the sublime doctrines, the heavenly choirs at majalis, the walks in virgin nature... yes. Everything was perfect; but I needed explanations; and there was no one to ask.

Sometimes after that dear cabbage of mine came, God forgive me (For everything; but this took the cake) there were *three* of us naked with him—the new and favorite "making love" to him in the middle with Hamideli and I on each side. This was revolting; but only now can I imagine thunder and lightning in heaven. It is exceedingly hard for me to write about this; and I'd rather leave it out; but I want to be sure the world knows the character of this very dangerous man, after I've died. The horror of this is one thing I realized even at the time (well, times plural) but I was so mesmerized by the idea of "an unsurpassable spiritual master," that every thistle went into the back of my mind until they *really* hurt! It did not help me, that the second and fourth "wives"—the ones who shared these outrageous gatherings—they were both "educated" in the matter, and both had some weird ideas of a master, which he shared or gave them. Those ideas come from some badly garbled Hindu doctrines (No fault of true Hinduism at all). Well, you see that making love, was through oral sexuality only; and for him only of course; and the two women

on the side... well, I think I've said enough for 100 years! Every single thing we did was forbidden; and the least of it was that grown women are not allowed to see one another naked. Sexual satisfaction is only allowed in the way which results in children; but almost from the time I met him, he was incapable of making love normally. My two extra sister-wives (not Latifeli) and he himself, had a doctrine: There was a spiritual union in swallowing the semen of such a holy person.

His whole doctrine, *and that of many false masters in different religions*, pretended to be above morality and exoteric religion. This is so dangerous that I have dared tell some dreadful things. Later, maybe you will see that I had a "job" to do—not to destroy the person (Only God knows His final judgement about each of us) but to finish off the *false ideas* as best I can.

My "dear little cabbage" brought out the worst in him, because she worshipped him. That encouraged him to show publicly, the exact same tendencies he had had in Switzerland; but there, he had some saintly disciples. His ego-centrism didn't affect anyone; but in Bloomington, the fourth wife encouraged him to show his true colors in public.

In a few years, he would even refuse to see me and hear how the situation had begun and become worse, step by step. He would let me be hauled off to jail when I was just calling out to him peacefully, saying I needed to explain misunderstandings. He stopped calling me by my name and accused me of things I hadn't done... it became a nightmare—and all that happened after his loving me more than anyone on earth, for 20 years!

Now before I go further, I must say that she may have died as an angel, totally purified; but she was a big lesson for me, and I'm sharing it because she hurt many after me, and there are too many people to save from trouble, too many lessons to be learned and she can't be hurt now. That precious friend of mine died early, after excruciating pain, and I pray that she became as pure as snow, and as good as gold. I do think that was the way she started; but too much success, power or love is extremely tempting. God tells us that life in this world is a test: That's oh-so-obvious when we suffer; but how we take love, power, wealth and fame is of crucial importance too.

One can repent and ask forgiveness, at any time, and in dying; but one must realize what one did. In the Quran, Pharaoh actually repented and submitted to Moses; but much too late. People can forgive everyone, even if they never see them again; but Allah knows who is sincere.

In the middle of it all, I remembered the book I'd read when I was nine years old: *Leave Her to Heaven* by Ben Ames Williams. My sister-wife seemed to be similarly morbidly jealous, but whenever I remembered that book, I said, "No! I mustn't draw such an awful conclusion, unless it is proven." By the time it was proven, it was too late: I had had to divorce my two husbands, leave my house, and all my friends. I had no way to make a living either. She and he

managed to change the rules in the middle, so it all seemed to be my fault; but "intrinsically," it wasn't. In the novel too, something similar was cooked up, and fine novelists are great knowers of human types.

After I was out of the picture, she tried to diminish his first wife too (Latifeli told me) and then she lied so much that hardly anyone in the community would remain friends with her until she was dying. For fifteen years after I left, the Shaykh saw nothing, adoring her until he passed away. She was lying so much that Sayyidah Latifah told me one couldn't believe a word she said. (Alas, Sayyidah Latifah had also lied up a storm—believing one could say anything to protect the reputation of the Shaykh). She deserved to have to live with a liar, walking around naked in her own house—as our sister-wife wasn't considerate for a penny. Well, she put up with Sayyidah Badriyyah—never breathing a word to the Shaykh, who had actually been fooled for good. Even Sidi Abdul Ali thought she was perfect, so I couldn't confide in him. There was "no saint to pray to,"[56] because *every single person* had become a Brussels sprout! But oh dear! These situations have occurred throughout history, in books, and this was not to be the only case in my life either. Us women can be treasures; but we sure can cause a lot of trouble if you get the wrong one of us! And if you're a Muslim, dreaming of having two or more wives, then you'd better take this book seriously first! Real polygamy, as allowed in Islam, is full of safeguards. Everyone is protected; each one has privacy, and wives can be friends like anyone else; but each one is alone with her husband, who does not have every right. He also has obligations. In our, false form of Islamic society, the Shaykh was more than a king. He was an emperor, king of the world, a bodhisattva, a universal sage, an Avataric phenomenon, infallible, a manifestation like the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Universal Man and the Seal of the Sages. There's more, but I've lost my memory with age!

He was such a genius—even in personality—and he had so much charisma, that it was *not* easy to see that all these things boiled down to megalomania. When he spoke, one realized the Absolute Reality of God; and He had ways which were childlike and innocent. Seeing through him was a real doozy of a problem; but he thrived on going against the commands of God. Unless one has some true education, one can mistake that for esoterism.

Actually, as long as one didn't slight or criticize him (in which case you were dead, quite simply), living with or around him seemed delightful—*until that crucial moment came*—that moment when one realized that what he taught and did was whatever pleased him. What pleases God is totally different. God said, "I decree what pleases Me," and Frithjof Schuon loved to do the opposite of that.

56 This phrase comes from the French, and means that one has no idea where to turn.

The last time I saw him, he and Sayyidah Badriyyah were finally making statues of the Virgin Mary, naked: I still wasn't thinking; but I'd been expecting that, knew it was a grave matter, and wondered who I could ask? There was no one I *could* ask; but much later God taught me Himself. Here's a hadith: Urwah ibn 'Abasah narrated that he said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "With what were you sent?" He said, "I was sent to uphold the ties of kinship, to break the idols, and so that Allah would be worshipped alone with no partner or associate." (Sahih Muslim, 832).

Now Frithjof Schuon thought he was *above* such decrees, like he was above everything and everybody; but oh Muslims! You know that Ibn Arabi is the greatest Shaykh of Islam, and he was far from being above *any* decree of the Shariah (sacred law). Rather did he say over and over again, that the Haqiqah *is* the Shariah: The highest, most secret Divine Knowledge *is* the sacred law. The more one practises the law, the more one knows the Absolute Truth.

In the Bible, David is always praising and contemplating the law: The reason is the same. He was not being a superficial literalist, by loving the law. In Islam, both David and his son, Solomon, are Prophets, and they are cleared of the faults attributed to them in the Bible. Those descriptions were due to peoples' changing revelation. Here's what the Quran says of them: "And certainly We gave *knowledge* to David and Solomon, and they both said, Praise be to Allah, Who has made us to excel many of His believing servants." (Quran 27:15). And to show you the opposite of a heretic, here are the words of David: "O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day." (119:97 King James Version). And Jesus said:"If you love Me, follow My commandments." (John 14:15).

But Frithjof Schuon managed to fly higher than *all* the Prophets, by calling Maryam (the Virgin Mary) the Mother of all Prophets, The Celestial Mother. Then he had a false vision of being adopted by her, so there he was, above Prophets, revelations and sacred laws. There are several telltale signs in false spiritual experiences: *One* is that they make the visionary great, not God or His Prophets. Another is that they have elements contrary to revelation.

Chapter 15
Woken Up in the Middle of the Night!

"So wake me up when it's all over,
When I'm wiser and I'm older.
All this time I was finding myself,
And I didn't know that I was lost!"
Song by Avicii

A sudden awakening

Having lived in a heaven on earth, for 20 years, I suddenly woke up! No, I didn't wake up at all: I got woken up! And that was a terribly rude awakening—so bad, from every angle, that I've never been able to describe it before. I think I can tell you now, the way I'd write in a diary; but be patient, as there are a dozen rather "dry" angles to consider before I tell you the human parts.

I wouldn't normally talk about this, so why do I? Well, first, why wouldn't I? There are extremely important reasons for *not* talking about many things. Such talk is contrary to the Sunnah, the Prophetic norm in Islam, and those reasons are almost identical to following the Commandments of Jesus, who said, "If you love me, follow my Commandments!" and "Judge not that ye be not judged." The reasons for not talking are in the Law of Moses too.

Another reason for not talking, is that some people who have passed away, cannot answer, and if I speak ill of what someone did at one time, he or she,

may have changed afterwards; but I can't know it. Furthermore, the hearts of people who are alive, might be hurt. Most importantly, our Lord can forgive anyone. We are supposed to love everyone (in a way); but judging them is up to the Lord. And we must absolutely not pretend to know how God judges anyone, or who goes to heaven or not.

So why do I talk anyway? I have a compelling reason: *in Islam, it is Sunnah to talk loud and clear*, *when the truth about Islam is at stake!* And everything that "happened" to "wake me up," was totally against the Sunnah. You people may have heard horrible stories too: Those have made the world think ill of Islam, which has *zero* resemblance to extremism. The Messenger of Allah said, "Those who exaggerate have destroyed themselves." Here's Islam: Aisha reported, "The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'Verily, gentleness is not found in anything but that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything but that it disgraces it.'" (Sahih Muslim, 2594).

And once I had left the heaven on earth, where anything wrong was kept in the family, we reached Bloomington. There, I faced public sins, so here's what a hadith says: Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "It is said that Allah the Exalted will not punish the entire community for the sins of a few. However, if evil is done publicly then everyone will deserve to be afflicted." (al-Muwatta, 1866).

In general, and in every matter, one must talk to prevent harm. Even if our mother or brother is the cause, we need to speak up to be kind and gentle towards an oppressed person. And telling someone the truth, at any level, is a kindness. In the spiritual "world," knowing the truth can be almost a matter of life or death, and discovering, and then leaving, a false spiritual master is devastating. I'll prevent that's happening to you or yours.

Another reason I'm talking is there are many women like me, who met passionate, greedy and/or heretical Muslim men. Then those women blamed Islam for their having been deceived, and wrote books which fed the fire of hatred between religions. This is idiotic: If anyone is bad, be he Christian, Vegan, African, Muslim, Canadian or Buddhist, he could leave a religion, a country or a race. Philosophically, it's mistaking the accident for the essence. As regards intelligence, it's plain stupid!

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, a great voice of orthodoxy in Islam, wrote a whole book about the dangers for oneself and others, of talking about peoples' faults and sins. The same authority said that one *must* talk, when sins have become publicly known. Well, the sins in this group of people—those people who I had thought were pious, saintly or saints—their sins have caused scandals all over the world. (I'm not exaggerating: They are known in 188 countries at the very least.[57] And I am a major figure in those scandals. I'm not interested

57 That figure is a minimum: Readers from 188 countries have visited my site frithjofschuon.wordpress.com online.

in clearing my name, and even if I did that, I've got mountains of other sins, which no one knows (thank goodness)! Anyway, I'll die soon, and only God can really forgive sins anyway.

What woke me up?

What woke me up, was incidents, a whole bunch of them. I wasn't completely awake for many years, but I'd been sleeping until a series of things happened in Bloomington, Indiana. The Shaykh didn't change at all when we moved there; but due to the encouragement of his fourth "wife," he manifested all the tendencies that could have been overlooked in Switzerland. Some things also could maybe have seemed acceptable between husband and wife, but they began to manifest in public.

There were profound reasons for the incidents, which revealed human and spiritual degeneration in the whole society around me: *We did not know*, *even the essence of the Sunnah*. For you who are not Muslims, that means that we followed no Prophetic norm. For Christians, it means that we were not trying to *live* the way Jesus lived and taught us to live. For Jews, we were not following the Law of Moses. I won't go on telling Jews and Christians that; but our God-given norms are almost identical.

Another reason we all went astray is that we had never seen what was outside of our own social circle. It was like that for me, and many people in the world are locked into similar situations. We didn't know other Muslims, or disciples of other Tariqahs. We did not pray in mosques or make Hajj or Umrah. Yes, I know that this is characteristic of cults; and yes, I realize that I was in one. However, that's quite an ambivalent, modern concept: What is not ambivalent, is the concept of heresy.

To give you a crystal clear example: Once I was planting lots of tulip bulbs in my garden. Well, I had a neighbor, who was not a disciple. She leaned over the fence, nice and neighborly, chatting about my coming crop of flowers. Being friendly, I gave her a few handfuls of my bulbs. Then, being friendly herself, she invited me over for a drink. I liked her, like to know my neighbors and would have gone—no matter what I drank. I could have said, "No thanks, I love orange juice!" But the Shaykh made a big point of this incident. (Actually, he let us all drink beer; it wasn't the alcohol he didn't like, it was that I'd waste time with a human being, who didn't know the truth like we did). There was hardly anyone in the world, living or dead, who was worth anything, except himself and his disciples! We were locked up; *but the main thing was*, *that not one of us lived according to the Prophetic norm, the Sunnah*. Being good to one's neighbor is *extremely* important. Sure: That neighbor may not live as you do, or may be a bad number from some point of view, but there are many ways to be good.

Every single incident I'll tell you now, is against the Sunnah. I didn't know that at the time and was bewildered; but that has done *me* nothing but good; that's why I want *you* to know about it. And my conclusion, coming before the facts, is that *true Islam* is the answer to everything. That word "true" *excludes* malevolent people quoting things out of context, *on both sides:* Every religion has weak believers, who are of illwill towards all but those of identical views. If Muslims follow the Sunnah and Christians follow what Jesus did and taught, then there will be peace in the world, goodwill toward all. We do not even have to know a word about one another's religion; loving our neighbor, compassion, is enough. I mean that *knowledge* or *education* is not even necessary, and most people can't have enough of either one anyway; but if you believe and are goodhearted, you can do wonders.

Why should you let me wake you up too?

Before I get to the point, I want to "apply for a job," working for you. I love jobs, so I'll tell you why I'm qualified to talk. I want you to believe me, because this adventure I had, is a warning. And it's useful. There are lots of warnings around, but my *conclusion* is different: The thing to do is not to leave Islam, or Sufism, or *your* religion, race or group. Nor is it to stop believing in God, or people: Find the truth and goodness where you are. You can go on learning about other ways of course. I mean don't throw one of God's revelations away, because you were hurt by some believer.

As concerns people, you know how I love them, and eminently you. I am fascinated by everything human. The first time I remember being fascinated by people, was when I read that gorey novel about a jealous woman, called, *Leave Her to Heaven* by Ben Ames Williams. It was awful, but so exciting in the conflicts among people, that I couldn't put it down. Maybe my finding it was providential, and a warning, because my fourth sister-wife became like the villain in there. Now I pray that she died absolutely purified of every sin and fault she had. There are reasons to hope that's true. If I *nonetheless* tell you how awful she was with me, it's because the story may save lives. My interest in people began with that negative, fictional, book; but ended with decades of fascination with Prophets and saints.

Not one person would dare tell the Shaykh about the faults of his fourth wife; so he loved and defended her for decades, while blaming her enemies (like me). They had a mutual admiration society, which made a Gordian Knot. They *both* believed and behaved contrary to the Sunnah in too many ways to count; but first of all (only us wives knew this): The Shaykh wanted us to follow *his* Sunnah, and not the Sunnah of the Prophet! That is serious: A hadith says that everyone will go to Paradise, except those who refuse. Who are those who refuse? Those who refuse to follow the Sunnah! I am *not* saying he won't go to

Paradise. God decides; but I sure *am* telling you that making light of following the Prophetic norm is "Life-Threatening."

There are so many things to criticize, that it's endless, and it was all due to not living by the Sunnah. No one told the Truth to anyone else. I mean Latifeli didn't tell Sheikheli about Badriyyeli, for 15 *more* years after I left. He lived, adoring her, in a lie—not knowing that she was lying. *If* he had a sense of truth (which I doubt) maybe he could have corrected her. As it was, she went on lying after he died, until she was rejected by nearly the whole society. I think only her ex-husband and his new wife stayed friends. The whole Tariqah was full of various kinds of lies, and that came out once: There was a Grand Jury Hearing, due to something the Shaykh did; and before it started, there was a secret meeting in the basement of the courtroom. Many people were there, to tell the Jury, in secret, that the fuqara were liars, and would lie. We did lie, under orders from the Shaykh, and they caught us.

A few years after the Shaykh died, Badriyyeli wanted to marry again and told everyone the Shakh had said she could. Then everyone, knowing that his permission was impossible, shut her out of their lives for lying—no fault of her new husband, who had no idea what she could be like. When she was dying, she asked everyone's forgiveness, and was buried with a lovely obituary about her talents and great love for beauty and nature.

I had been gone for a long time, when the Shaykh passed away, when she remarried, and then passed away herself. But I was always thinking about people, and learning.

Once one matures a bit, novels don't seem so interesting; one gets a taste for truth, not fiction. Still, great novelists know a lot about personality and character, so I devoured novels for decades—discovering that there's an enormous variety of human types. Then, after hearing that God existed, I got fascinated by Prophets, and holy people, good people—along with some who were just famous, due to some amazing gift. Nobody got left out: I read about some famous sinners too.

Later, destiny had it that I got notions of physiognomy, auras, spirits, ghosts, mediums, magic and good exorcism. Part of that, I learned from "the Shaykh," who seemed to know everything about every*body*—and he knew about things that don't have bodies too: Spirits and ghosts. He's the one who first told me about the aura, which is the usually invisible layer of psychic energy on our skin. Not even Latifeli believes in many of the things he taught me when I was upstairs, and he was explaining human nature to me. Since I was his most loved person in the world, his perfect wife and Shakti, he taught me everything—and I'm still grateful for that learning, oh my Lord—the learning which came in spite of everything!

It helped that I became a librarian too, only by accident; but that meant that many books passed through my hands, so I came across books about

people who had all kinds of gifts: As artists, musicians, poets, healers and teachers. Working for a lifetime, with characters from all around the world, added dimensions. In the workplace, one meets personality disorders too, so I read a stack full of books on those. Even babysitting, as a child, let me know different families; and after I left the Tariqah, I had to be a live-in household helper in seven different houses. Due to those families, I met my employers' relatives and neighbors, and heard all their problems in getting along together.

Living in several countries, and traveling helped too; but one of the most interesting things was seeing almost every visitor who came to Pully and then Bloomington, to see the Shaykh. There were always guests from other countries, staying in the nearest hotels. Since Sidi Abdul Ali was a Na'ib, we had them all to our house for a dinner some evening or afternoon. Each guest had his story, his problems... and his type of genius, with talents too. The fuqara were what one would call "qualitative" in a worldly sense: They were nearly all attractive physically, successful, gifted and distinguished—with diplomats and people knighted by the Queen of England. With time (I mean *ages*) I realized that my precious first sister-wife, Latifeli, the daughter of an ambassador, was very worldly, but in a hard-to-see way. She and the Shaykh were solidly "married," although she remained a virgin. They had a marriage of the same values—being exceedingly influenced by charisma, talents, success and everything exterior. That was so tricky that I can hardly describe its effect.

My whole life seems destined to make me rich in knowledge—at least in knowledge of human nature. What I've always wanted infinitely more, was knowledge with a capital K: Divine Knowledge. I still love people now; but I'm madly in love with those who Know the Truth, and who are Real and Good. That love, and my whole Real Life (I mean spiritual life) began from hearing about a capital letter on the word Truth; and thank goodness I never got over it! Books are okay; but living people who know God and His Prophets—oh dear, I've died of love! In Islam (I don't know as much about other religions) there are still people who are like the companions. Their existence until the end of the world was predicted. It's exceedingly hard to find them though; and it sure seems one has to go through a lot first!

The chameleon

The most interesting thing I've learned about us humans, concerns piety and character. And the characters of the greatest people make you change for the best inside, whether you only read about them or know them. That's one of the many reasons for reading revelation and saints' lives, and for doing your best to have good company. In what follows, you'll see me learning about some exceedingly complicated characters. By far the most complex person I've ever known, was Frithjof Schuon, "the Shaykh." He was complex, because for every

one of his faults, he had a camouflage—like a chameleon. One could ask: What color was it *really*?

Now this gets so "dense," that I'm going to put the "Concluding Summary" first. Otherwise, you may not understand for decades—like me. I don't want that to happen to anyone else, and many people are still in the dark. I often say, "Things aren't always what they seem. Skim milk often masks as cream." But it was a lot worse than a matter of skim milk and cream!

When "the Shaykh" had some sexual idea, he often hid behind something to do with innocent childlikeness. Either he was a child, was like one, or talked in a delightfully childlike manner. When he wanted to do something forbidden, he did it in a beautiful and sacred-seeming manner; and a favorite idea of his was a dictum of Plato: "Beauty is the splendor of the true." That made him think that if some act was beautiful, then he could do it; but God has said otherwise in every revealed religion: Beautiful or not, He said, "Do what pleasesth Me," and "I have decreed what pleaseth Me!"

When he showed off, proudly, he hid behind words that he knew a humble person would use. He was a genius, and a very learned, self-taught man, so he knew perfectly well how to manifest each virtue... *except* in moments of sudden stress. Then he lost his head, and the chameleon hadn't time to change colors! I didn't realize that he was a chameleon, until that had happened a few times. Many people still have no idea, because they never saw a sudden change; others have never been on the wrong side of him. That got really hot; but I'm absolutely delighted it happened to me! When things seem bad, God knows better; and for those on a spiritual path, all things work together for good. At age 80, I could think that my whole life was useless; but I see perfectly well how each incident was necessary, and I've been compensated infinitely well for every single thing that seemed to go wrong.

Once I was astonished: I saw him looking at me with hatred! That was because I had told him he would have a difficult interview soon. Furious, he said I had ruined his time until that interview—a matter I understood and accepted; but the hatred? Soon I was seeing him yelling, and saying he knew absolutely everything, so no one could ever inform him of anything. Now comes a remark for you very highly educated folks: A certain kind of infallibility does exist; but it's based upon absolute conformity with revelation. He pooh-poohed revelation, and the matter he was talking about when he claimed perfect knowledge, was a matter of character. He thought he knew the man who was being criticized better than did those who were criticizing him. Within months, that person caused a scandal, and proved the Shaykh to be dead wrong.

Seeing wasn't believing for me!

The beginning of the end started when I was maybe 45, and I started seeing things that were distressing; but I don't know how to describe these things, except with tiny little episodes. Those were coming in waves like mountains, all of a sudden, as if to wake me up. But I didn't really wake up; I saw what was happening, realized I'd been blind, *but could not* BELIEVE *what I was seeing with my own two eyes*!

I'm a great one for exaggerating; but when these things had accumulated up to a certain point, I literally lost my mind. It took another two decades to realize that, and by the time I knew what had happened, I was quite objective. It takes a "hell on earth" to drive one out of one's mind; and I have to describe that, as a severe warning. I'm fine again, and it was worth it; but not everyone is as hardy as I am. (Faith keeps one from being severely harmed mentally or emotionally). You'll read about this later, in Swachamina Village, on "The Day of the Hardboiled Egg."

I had "saving graces" all the time. For one thing, I had Sammy for a father! "Frances" died 30 years before he did; but throughout the worst of my trials, he was there—always a loving father, until the day he died at 91. He was about the last of my living relatives. Although I have cousins, they are Christians and Jews, who stopped writing to me the day he died. That's only one reason I've adopted people though. My father died in Pakistan and without property; but you can tell that I inherited his sense of the ridiculous!

Chapter 16
Pride, Passion and Nudity, in the Wrong Places

"And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth gently, and when the ignorant address them harshly, they say 'peace.'"

Quran 25:63

Telltale words

When I was telling you about being in a heaven on earth, I didn't mention some things, because I hardly noticed them. Only after decades did they sink in. Now I'm trying to follow the Sunnah a little bit here, by not saying *everything* private and concerning the intimacy between husband and wife; but this is a tough job, and I've got to be frank enough to scare you (or hopefully not. Most of you knew enough in the first place; but your children may not)!

You won't understand this until the end; but I've got a job to do, and it's a job of encouraging, but also scaring the living daylights out of you. In a way, I'd rather arrange flowers or preach; but this is the job my Lord has given me. There are two women in the Bible who had jobs resembling mine: Jael and Judith. The most disagreeable tasks fell to their lot; but the best thing to want is what the Lord wants *for* you.

Ibn Arabi said that if you ask God for something, He may give you that; but you may lose Him. If you only seek Him, you will find Him. (One can ask for what one thinks is right, but only in being submitted to the knowledge that

God knows best.) I'm doing the job he gave me, and not complaining. I don't know why exactly, but I'm crazy about having jobs to do with anything good.

In the beginning, when I was, it seemed "married," to the Shaykh, I was heavily burdened. At home, I already had a husband to attend to (and he didn't know I wasn't "his" anymore: That was still a secret, so I had two husbands: Tension galore for a woman.) And I had a household with cooking and cleaning, *and* five hours of traveling a day to a full-time job working in Geneva, *and* I was supposed to be what I'd always wanted with all my heart: A faqirah, on a spiritual path. That came last—all things considered. Sidi Abdul Ali, who was highly qualified as a professor of about any subject, had to teach little boys, due to the laws for residence in Switzerland, so he earned little; but I worked for an intergovernmental organization and earned most of what we lived on.

Well the Shaykh saw I had to work (but he had *no* idea what that meant)! He told me that he couldn't support me, as husbands do; but he hoped that it was a gift of grace for me (or anyone, as I realized later) to see his private parts. I thought that must be the way some men are. This is serious: Pay attention! It's no joke. You see, he thought that *he himself* was some kind of a Divine "Incarnation." Those around me used the words: "An Avataric Phenomenon." An Avatara is a Divine incarnation in Hinduism—something like Jesus Christ. Now if you're an extremely learned person, please excuse my lack of theology: The words I've used are likely not exact, but good enough to get the point across. If this *were* a purely sexual subject, between man and woman, I would not say this out loud; but later, when we lived in Bloomington, he made evident, what he told me in Switzerland: That he wanted *everyone* to see his private parts *because he thought he was so great, that seeing him naked was a gift to mankind!*

What is the teaching in revelation? "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts. That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do." (Quran, 24:30).

He was a megalomaniac, who was a genius. He even seemed spiritually brilliant, except to well brought-up, born Muslims, or people with lots of common sense, or "integrally" real spiritual people. Those were mostly other Shuyukh, outside the Tariqah, who understood perfectly from a few sentences or a fact. One could see through his character, and many did — leaving, after creating much "noise." That "noise" is all over the internet, and unfortunately, it's mostly just that: "Noise," created by people who like to bang pieces of metal together, i.e. scandal-mongers. Another unfortunate thing is that much of the information that those scandal-mongers thrived on, began with me, but became hopelessly distorted. As Sammy's daughter, I'll say: Now you're hearing it right from the horse's mouth! I am the only one who knows, and both *can* and *will* talk.

He must have been born with too many gifts, and also with some "openings" of which he was conscious as a child. Born gifted in nearly every way,

he had some kind of spirito-psychic gift, or psycho-spiritual "crack" or "opening," that let *only some* Divine Knowledge and beauty flow into him.[58] The upper psychic domain "meets" the lower spiritual realm, so one can have spiritual-seeming visions; *however*, something will be askew. An individual's psyche will appear in the fact that the message is self-serving, or else there will be something contrary to revelation, as a tell-tale sign. Good people can even benefit from such mixed blessings; but egocentric people will not. Did I tell you that us people are complex and interesting, varied, full of contradictions? I mean it's serious! We are both fascinating and unbelievably complex. Whenever I think I know it all, I'm flabbergasted by some new and totally unexpected twist—some good, and some not so good!

As an illustration, many Muslims have had visions, locutions and miracles from the Virgin, named Maryam in Islam. If she is seen unclothed, the experience must be rejected. Frithjof Schuon and his fuqara had visions of her, the way he painted her, naked, or bare-breasted. As the nursing mother of Jesus, in Christianity, there is no conflict. In Islam, unless the child Jesus is with Maryam, neither she nor anyone could be unclothed. The reason that Frithjof Schuon and his fuqara saw her in distorted visions, was that everyone was under the thrall of the "master," who had an exceedingly powerful psyche, and for him esoterism meant nudity—no matter what God had said. As concerns his powerful psyche, I didn't realize it; but my dear friend Lucie von Dechend, had known him as a child. Once, when he felt offended because his parents wanted him to wear an undignified hat to school, she dreamt that he was wearing the three-tiered tiara of an emperor. Nothing was wrong with her: She simply manifested *his* psychic "dream." At the end of her life, she did not know the worst sides of her childhood friend, and being his disciple seemed to have done her no harm: She was a lovely, saintly person! يرحمها الله (May God have mercy upon her).

Although he practised it only briefly, as a young man, and in joking, he really could hypnotize people. I'm quite convinced, because he told me about the time he used to do that, when he was employed as a designer in Paris. There's no doubt in my mind, and it's actually significant: He had a dominant psyche. People, who related to him (even if they lived far away) were affected by that—some in very beguiling ways that I can't go into at length; but he was, in himself, a really tricky spiritual mystery.

Most unfortunately, he is not alone, although he may get a prize: The world, *especially the Occidental world*, is chock full of false spiritual guides at all levels, and I'm pretty sure, in all religions. What's worse, is that there are people who have faulty or partial spiritual realization; while being astray or ignorant. It seems that our times are so dominated by darkness (ignorance and evil) that

58 See Appendix VI: A Chart of Human Zones.

few leaders and few disciples have the purity of intention, or the perfect sincerity, to either lead or follow. That results in a plethora of false guides with falsely motivated followers at all levels and angles. The great Turuq of the past are *not* exceptions: They nearly all have degenerate branches, with Shuyukh who let their disciples form personality cults around them, and/or they teach that one must follow the Quran, Sunnah and Shariah; but they don't know what's in them! In Islam, knowing Arabic is an important skill for a guide: It's a sacred language, and Islam opens up into dimensions when one knows a sufficient amount of Arabic.

He had chosen the name "Jesus" (Isa in Arabic) for himself. Now actually, he had heard a voice, long before he chose that name. The voice said, "Oh Jesus, the Light of Religion." In Arabic that's, "Ya Isa Nur ud-Din." Only after forty more years, did I realize that Jesus represents a spiritual summit in Islam—the apex of a triangle: *He* is the Seal of Sanctity, and that word Seal, like all highest concepts, had to be his somehow... Now I'm not certain about this; but I think he thought he was a manifestation of Jesus, the Seal of Sanctity, in His Second Coming *until* we were in Bloomington. Then, he got even higher than that as the Seal of the *Sages*, and as the Universal Sage. That was the station that put him above all Prophets, saints, Sacred Laws and revelations.

His second wife, Sayyidah Hamidah—believing he was a Prophet, had written many texts proving what she thought with brilliant symbolic analyses. He had seen those texts; he had not corrected her. Then came a momentous visit to Morocco: The Perrys' daughter, Murayyim, had married a Moroccan faqir. So the Shaykh, Sayyiah Latifah, and the parents of Murayyim went to see her and the many fuqara of Morocco. Well: Mother met daughter! They talked! Sayyidah Hamidah told her beloved daughter that the Shaykh had three wives, and that she herself was also one of them. She also gave those texts to her beloved daughter... and she also admitted how she was upset about my coming! (I had no idea, as she seemed to have a melted ego). Not only all that: She managed to tell both Murayyim and the Shaykh, that she, Murayyim, would be the fourth wife! (Hamideli and Sheikheli forgot that Islam does not allow a man to marry a woman *and* her daughter). When they remembered it, Hamideli got him to accept having Murayyim be naked in bed with him—like Abishag with David! And the Shaykh embraced Murayyim once! Well: Murayyyim was married to a *Moroccan:* Those men are nothing like Americans. They know Islam, and do not sacrifice their wives, like two Americans had done!

So: Murayyim told her husband everything and she showed him those texts, which were sheer heresy. I had never read those, but I knew there was no Prophet after Muhammad. Practically all the Moroccans left the Tariqah and there was—guess what? The usual: a scandal.

Later, back in an appointment with both Hamideli and me, he nicely told her that he hadn't been paying attention to her texts; but he sweetly praised her intention. It was then that he told us two that he was not a Prophet (not Nabi or Rasul): He was: The Seal of Sages! Now that, my friends, is *higher than all Prophets!* (At least he thought so). At that point, he stopped identifying himself so much with Jesus too: He was above everyone who had ever existed. Now I am not sure what is the rank of Sages with God; but it doesn't really matter, because Frithjof Schuon became one by himself: No diploma came down from heaven. The scandal took place when we were still in Switzerland; but that talk in which he became the Seal of the Sages occurred in Bloomington, later.

Frithjof Schuon heard voices and saw things in dreams; and he experienced supposedly spiritual states—all proving *precisely* what he wanted to believe! It's *really hard* to see through things like this, but don't think I'm a genius. In my old age, I was taught about what Islam really is!

Before he became a Seal, he could be quite superstitious and was very influenced by signs—especially if they concerned Jesus. Soon after I arrived in Switzerland, I was at the Qayyumids house for Christmas Eve, when Sayyidah Latifah came rushing in. She needed Sayyidah Hamidah immediately, to console the Shaykh. He had received a book, for a Christmas present, and it was full of painful pictures of the Crucifixion, so he had asthma. I understood everything except his identification with Jesus Christ. Sayyidah Hamidah was such a devoted disciple, that I didn't need to know she was his "wife:" She was the kind of person one could need in distress, as her loving and poetic nature could be a balm for hearts... in spite of her character, which I hadn't encountered the downsides of yet.

In Switzerland, we lived in an apartment building right at the bottom of his garden. I was at home once and prayed for him to be in a golden ball of warmth and light. The next time I saw him, he had dreamt that he was in a golden ball of warmth and light. *There were lots of things like this!* I don't know why exactly; but it seemed that God willed to make his psyche and gifts a test for *him*; but He also made *him* an unsurpassably tricky phenomenon, as a test for *us!* Maybe we'll none of us know until the Next World, why our Lord allowed so many real graces too (for good disciples, who didn't know him closely enough) along with meaningless signs, symbols, visions and locutions.

This was a spiritual mystery to end everything—and, in my opinion, it came near the end of the world,[59] when darkness, ignorance and sin prevails. Not many have discernment these days, and I wouldn't have had any either; but God let me get into conflict with those people, due to a certain Sidi Faisal, as you'll see later. That conflict humiliated me to the nth degree: I fell flat on

59 In Hindu terms, we are living in the final Manvantara of the Kali Yuga. God knows best about all matters!

my face; but thank goodness, my falling brought out the worst in all of them. I could almost see it; but eventually, it led to the saving of me!

Back to our theme: He thought that his Shaykh, the great Shaykh al-Alawi of Algeria, had named him his successor-Shaykh, in a symbolic way. You see, when the Shaykh al-Alawi initiated him, he said, "Come forward that I may *give you the Tariqah*." The Shaykh thought those words were naming him the successor-Shaykh. Well, a few months ago, I was finally initiated into a true Tariqah. The (precious, real) Muqaddam who would initiate me wrote me a letter: "Tomorrow, after asr prayer, *I will give you the Tariqah!*" Frithjof Schuon had had another "dream of grandeur."

Long after that "private parts" remark, I saw him come down a stairway in Bloomington, wearing a full Native American war bonnet (the most majestic head-covering in the world for men). He'd never have done that in Switzerland, albeit us wives saw him like that. The room below was full of fuqara—I'd guess fifty of us, all attractively dressed in authentic Indian clothes. He was naked, except for such a narrow loincloth, that everyone could see his private parts. That was no accident: In my presence, he and my cabbage had practised the width of that cloth so everyone could see him naked; but dead on center, he seemed minimally decent.

That day was one of the few times I did not like the expression on his face. I don't really believe in judging much by facial expressions (except in movies: Actors can be great, and being so interested in people, I'm *quite* interested). That time, when he was coming down the stairs, adorned with the magnificent headdress, I saw him with a look of idiotic pride. It was partly sexual too, in that he had a cult of his own masculinity; and in general, he had the craziest ways of inserting his sexuality into the spiritual life. He had had a majestic look, physically, when he was younger; but he was over 80 then, and looked plain ridiculous.

I had one foot out the door. Yes I know: I should have been flying out. In contrast to the Shaykh, Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri reported: "The Messenger of Allah was even shier than a virgin behind her veil..." (Al-Bukhari 2:4). And once, before the weight of Prophethood was upon him, Muhammad was naked for a few minutes with some working men, who were using their waistcloths to protect their shoulders from cuts when they were carrying stones on their backs. He fainted, and awoke, saying "My washcloth, my waistcloth!" Never was he seen naked again. But Frithjof Schuon thought he was above all Prophets, and he represented the naked Truth: That gave him every right. He was related to Maryam, the mother of *all* the Prophets, *he said* (God never mentioned that)! And he had had a vision in which he flew *up into the sky* (above Prophets) with her! You'll soon get the idea: He was *up higher*, all the time, and from childhood, but by his own will! Sayyidah Latifah said he spoke of the *highest* Gnosis too. Well, he managed to get higher than the Truth of God... and many people

fell (down) in front of—not God, not Divine Knowledge, not Truth: They fell down at Frithjof Schuon's feet. Oh la la! That's death!

The Shaykh and Latifeli had decided that if anyone objected to his nakedness on that Indian Day, they would say he was wearing tights. One man *did* ask Sayyidah Latifah afterwards, "Why was he naked?" She replied that he wasn't naked; he had been wearing tights (which he'd never wear anywhere — even under his clothes. He couldn't stand tight things). The faqir said, "No, he *was* naked." Much later, I met that faqir: He had never been invited again, and was suffering terribly from having lost his "perfect" spiritual master. Like me, he still thought the Shaykh was perfect; but that lying was common among the wives and fuqara. He became a Christian after a while. So did many, who were morally straight; now they are hiding—wanting nothing to do with anyone who is or was in the "aura" of the Tariqah.

The "superior man," in the "vocabulary" of the "Shaykh" and his "Tariqah" was the one most conscious of the Absolute... not of the Will or Orders, Laws or Criteria of the Absolute. His definition of the best man (*highest*) was a description of himself: he thought *he* was the highest. But God, the Absolute, and His Prophet in Islam, had other criteria: "A man got up and asked the Prophet, "Who is the best of the people?" He answered, "The best of the people is the most learned, the most God fearing, the most enjoining virtue, the most prohibiting vice and the most to be joining the kin." Another hadith is: "There are four characteristics that, if you possess them, will prevent you from being affected if you are deprived of certain worldly benefits. They are good character, chaste outlook, honesty, and trustworthiness." (Sahih Bukhari 3:289).

There were hundreds of photographs of him naked; they were in every house in Bloomington; and Badriyyeli painted him—with him present and commenting—I'm guessing a hundred times, naked. We were all convinced by the idea that started with him: He was so great, that seeing him naked was a great blessing. Latifeli wrote a lying text, defending those "icons," quite convincingly as usual. She said he only approved of them with regret, for the private use of the one who painted them.

No Muslim man is allowed by God, to be naked except with his wife and small children. God says that He Himself is shy; the angels are shy, and shyness (*haya*) is the specific virtue of Islam. Now the English word "shy" does not allow for the depth in the Arabic word, but for here the words "shyness" and "modesty" will suffice. To him nudity and pure esoterism, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he himself... were one, and they were above all Prophets, revelations and sacred laws. You see he saw Maryam as the mother of *all* the Prophets, and he, himself had had union with her. (Yes, sexual; but just now I'm realizing that the few who knew that found it symbolic). In writing, he had said, "To say more does not become me." What a jackass! And oh how decorated he

made himself: Decorated with noble-seeming discretion and a childlike sense of innocence.

After a certain point, when Sayyidah Badriyyah had settled down as being our fourth sister-wife, there was nudity everywhere. We had a nude wedding in which the bride and all the beautiful young women were stark naked. The men wore very little, including the Shaykh. Those men only wore moccasins and an Indian loincloth. It was beautiful in a way, but so absolutely forbidden in Islam! My heart sort of bleeds now for the bride who was seen stark naked on her wedding night by every man in her society. In fact, my heart is bleeding, period: I'm telling you these things to help people stay away from that Tariqah and learn discernment. Then I'm retiring for good.

We were allowed to make retreats naked; there were photographs of everybody naked and especially hundreds and hundreds of photographs of the Shaykh naked. One of them, it turned out, was making him look especially handsome. He said that he'd been in a *haal* when that photograph had been taken. Sounded like an odd time to have a haal to me. A haal is a state of spiritual elevation. Several times he said he was in a haal; but another time he said that haals and *maqams* (permanent spiritual states) don't exist. It seems they don't exist—except when Frithjof Schuon ordered otherwise.

Chapter 17
Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

"Preach the Truth as if you had a million voices. It is silence that kills the world."

St. Catherine of Sienna

No one to talk to

After the night of the intrinsic garlic, the loving friendship between Badriyyeli and me, went down, down, day by day; but I couldn't tell a soul: Everyone adored her. Once I tried to talk to Sidi Abdul Ali, because we'd lived together for decades, and had much respect for one another's intelligence. I'm imaginative compared to him, so I do things that seem wilder; but we really we were both reasonable types and got along perfectly. Well, when I started trying to explain how she was treating me, he started yelling saying, "Do not criticize Sayyidah Badriyyah!" I'd never heard him yell at anyone before—not in our 24 years of living together; but he thought she was some kind of embodiment of esoterism; which was just what the Shaykh thought.

One day she came to our house for lunch—only with the Shaykh and Latifeli—no Qayyumids that time. As soon as they'd all hung up their coats, she took her clothes off as usual. We were used to that: She was naked everywhere, no problem. But after lunch, when we were all seated, as usual, around a straw mat on the floor (with the Shaykh a bit higher, on a low Moroccan divan) she sat with her knees spread wide apart, so we were all looking at her most

private parts! I'm, well, what can I say... "broad-minded;" but I was shocked to death that she would do that in front of Latifeli, and Sidi Abdul Ali! I saw the Shaykh's face: He had no dignity whatsoever, and was plain ogling at her. That was one of very few times I'd say he lacked a noble look; but he was a disgrace! And he said nothing to reproach her—quite the contrary; he looked delighted! Part of his delight was due to something we were all used to: He loved *audacity* in flouting the law. Later, I knew that his saying nothing was inexcusable.

Aside from the sexuality of it; he loved a way she had of throwing discretion to the wind. She was higher than law for him—his perfect match, the embodiment of esoterism! We had all read a lot of books about every subject; and some were about *men*¡ Some men, both wonderful and terrible, are by nature, hundreds of times more sexual than others. Women may be that way too; but it's much more common among men. Furthermore, we were all too intelligent to blame anyone for the nature he was born with. What *is* blameworthy is how one channels one's innate tendencies. Once, I saw the second wife of Sidi Abdul Quddus. The Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah kept her hidden and mocked her when she was helpless and needed charity money after her husband died. Why the mockery? Because she was a nymphomaniac: Intelligent and spiritual, but embarrassing. She must have been born with an imbalance of hormones. So what! I'd forget it, but when they came to Pully, few people were invited to majalis. I pray for her, and wish she had received zakat until she died.

After that, they all got up to leave, and somehow, Latifeli and I were alone in our kitchen before they stepped out the door. She said, "I was brought up to think that kind of thing was a disgrace!" "So was I," I said. Then she put her coat on, took the Shaykh's arm, and walked him home, as usual. I never heard another word about it; but the incident was simmering in me, and I'm ashamed to tell you where: It was in the back of my mind—with all the other stuff. I'd remember it sometimes and wonder why Latifeli didn't leave him and the Tariqah, on the spot. But even now, when last I heard, she's still alive at age 94, and still his greatest defender. And she's thoroughly convinced that the highest Gnosis came from him, and she thinks that morality is... I don't know what? Irrelevant? I wished I could have asked her, and would have gone to see her and asked—even humbly—but she didn't feel well enough to see me—albeit she saw other people often. Although we were doing wonderfully well by mail and phone, she thought seeing me would cause strong emotions (She was right) and she said she got angina under stress.

After everyone had left that day, I looked at Sidi Abdul Ali. He had always been my "boxful" of answers to almost all questions about everything. I didn't say a word; but he saw a question on my face. "She's a certain kind of woman," he said. It was as if he had read about women like that. And he had read about all one can read, from age five to seventy-some. He had indeed read about that kind. Now I realize it: She was the kind that... well, I'd better not say. She had

the most terrible death too, after being the healthiest person I'd known. One can only hope that she was purified by suffering, because her sins were beyond anything bad. So were her sufferings: Allahumma! Suffering does purify.

I had a lot of "doubts" (worse) about this; but as usual, I would not think for myself, and there were several reasons for that. One reason you all know: I had the most tremendous respect for all of them. But there was another, essential reason: I knew of no *norm* as to *how to think*. That *norm* is in Islam, and particularly in the Sunnah. None of us knew enough about Islam, or if some did know, they thought Frithjof Schuon was... get this: *above* it! He was always higher, and so was his Tariqah. René Guénon mocked him for looking down upon the idea that he would have "a Tariqah like all the others." Guénon wished our Tariqah *were* like others, and he had no idea how far different it could get.[60]

Another time, all us wives were being photographed together, sitting in front of his house. Only a second before the picture was taken, Badriyyeli slipped out of her blouse—so there we were—three dressed and one bare-breasted. Finding that more than "refreshing," one faqir put the picture up in the vestibule of his house. The Bloomingtonians were thriving on that kind of thing. I got the point, and laughed often because I like refreshing, imaginative things; but I had no idea what was where.

Oh dear, oh dear! Alack alas! Do you remember, or haven't I told you yet, about the verse I found in the Quran, at least seven times? This Tariqah was going to be destroyed! And my former best friend died early, when I was 79 and fine. Latifeli, who lived to be at least 94,[61] told me about her... but you'll see later.

The day I met Badriyyeli—when I first called her "my dear little cabbage"—she was an adorable and pure, naïve and natural young woman; and believe it or not she never was a sexual type; but that's too hard to explain. Many people are ruined by troubles: They become bitter and despair, blame people and God, instead of becoming purified. She was corrupted by the absolute love and devotion of a whole society, and by success, on every plane. She became more than a queen, had the most beautiful house I've ever seen (which is saying something), and had marvelous health until her fatal illness, cancer. Being the Shaykh's favorite person in his whole lifetime was the summit though.

She became visibly proud and high-seeming—sometimes unbearably so. Before I decided to move away a few miles, I inherited a large sum; but I spent

60 See Appendix II: Letters From René Guénon Concerning Frithjof Schuon.

61 She's 95 now and dying. Murayyim, an "enemy," but like a daughter, got in to see her. She told *her* "Tifa" and *my* "Latifeli" that I sent her my love. I was grateful for that—so happy! I loved and still love her so much. I pray that she may be forgiven, as she was a perfect wife.

most of it to get away from her for a month—going to Florida on a so-called vacation, in a rather miserable spot, just far from her.

Although she used to come see me at our house every day, she stopped coming as soon as her own house was finished. When I mentioned that, she said it was only because she was too busy, teaching dancing to the younger faqirah, who wanted to dance for their husbands.

In a way, her house had come from me: One day a wealthy man came and offered me a large sum of money he'd just inherited; but I said, "No, give it to Sayyidah Badriyyah. I'm sure the Shaykh would love a place to have, inside a house, for Indian Days; because the weather turns bad sometimes, our neighbors may start complaining, and he is getting older. I'm sure he'd participate more if she had a house designed for that."

When she did come to see me, it was always with some criticism from him, which I couldn't explain to him; or she'd say, "He doesn't want you to talk about such and such a problem anymore." I was trying to understand his views about Murayyim; and he didn't want to talk about her. Now I know why: He was wrong, whereas she was dead on center right! She was the Moroccan's wife he had embraced. He and Latifeli had painted her as being evil.

By then, I'd given Badriyyeli most of my time with him, and always saw him with her at her new house. Almost the whole time I was there, he'd be making love to her—in a way forbidden in Islam. Well, I both loved her and magnanimity so much that I wasn't jealous; but I got bored to death. The worst thing was that I thought she was the only one of us, who was *really* his wife. I had good reasons to think that, from things he said; but I didn't tell the other two wives: I could accept that; but I thought they'd be devastated!

The Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah often quoted the Latin proverb *"Alteram partem audiam"* ("Hear the other side") when someone criticized him or the Tariqah, without asking for their views. Well, I can't exactly tell you their side; but I can give you a glimpse of the esteem his admirers had for him; and I can summarize what the "other side" thinks of me. I could add "and people like me;" but there are no "others." Oh! First, I should say that there are many scandalous articles online, by people who left the Tariqah. There are maybe six, and, unless I missed one somewhere, I want nothing to do with the other critics. I'm the only one I approve of—for good reasons, and in spite of some really intelligent analyses, many of which are too high falutin for me to understand. For some reason (I think that reason was the unleashing of negative forces due to mixing religious forms; but God knows best) there was a "rash" of scandal-mongers, people who sort of wallowed in mud and added ludicrous lies, exaggerations and subjective impressions, to a situation which was horrid to start with. Those reports are extrapolations, and if they weren't, they'd have served as reform.

How important are the two "sides" of this issue?

They are *immensely* important, because we are facing a heresy. A heresy can exist in one person, or say in one group, mosque or church. In a way, I showed you an example in one Protestant, Christian denomination: Remember when I saw that a Bible Study book was showing admiration for a teaching which lowered Jesus Christ (I mean, really; that was too much)! A little boy, who did not understand, supposedly *did* "understand," when he said, "I like Jesus. He's cool!" Those words are so trivial, and show such a zero understanding of the greatness of Jesus, that my blood curdles, and *I am a Muslim!* There are also heresies in whole religions, and I can't quite prove it; but I know people who can. Worse than *all* those types of heresy (A heresy is devil-caused anti-Truths about God and His revelations)... worse than heresies in religions, is heresies in esoterism—the most sacred, innermost or highest doctrines in each religion. Esoterism is the Heart of a religion. Worse than *all* of those possibilities above, is a heresy in *universal* esoterism, in the Religio Perennis,[62] or the Perennial philosophy: That kind of heresy destroys the essence of *all* religions at once! And that's what we saw with Frithjof Schuon.

So now what do "they" say about (it's too obvious) me? Well, one thing they say is *right*: Those believers in Frithjof Schuon's Divine Knowledge say that I do not understand the doctrines involved. That's right: I've always been "last in my class" for understanding metaphysics. However, now I know other Shuyukh, who know more than anyone; but in addition, now I know what *all* the greatest Gnostics have said from time immemorial[63] and what they *all* say is that one cannot be higher than God. That means that there's nothing higher than revelation and revealed sacred law. For Muslims, that means the Quran, the Sunnah and the Shariah... and it is God Who says there's nothing higher, not me!

In 2019, my dearest first sister-wife, Latifeli, and I had some phone talks when I lived at Lakeview Village, without enmity. Well, she said something like "dearest Sheikheli spoke the *highest* esoterism." That was exactly the problem: People fell for *height*—not noticing that Frithjof Schuon was flying too high, like a balloon, ready to be brought down by the prick of a pin.

There *are* some doctrines that one can (but not legitimately) mix with others, to justify being above morality;[64] but there are so many faults in there, that it's too complicated a subject for me. And in any case, one cannot *use* esoterism to disguise one's desires and pride. There's a Latin saying: "*Corruptio*

62 The Religio Perennis, also called the Perennial philosophy, is the Truth in the hearts of *all* religions. That Truth has been there forever: God's Words never change. The different revelations have all agreed in essence: Everyone must submit to God.

63 See Appendix VIII: Quotations from the Masters of Tasawwuf.

64 A "Universal Man" is so great that he is above morality; however, he sees the wisdom in sacred laws so well, that he would never stop obeying them. And God knows best.

optimi pessima" ("the corruption of the best is the worst"). In this heresy, the highest, most sacred science—universal esoterism—was "made a prostitute" by being used to mask pride, prejudice and passion. The masks were not only intellectual though: Traditional beauty, virgin nature and a sense of the child-like—all played roles.[65]

Frithjof Schuon, *Messenger* of the Perennial philosophy (This is the title of a lecture of his, so he was alive to name it). "Messenger," is a word no real Muslim would use for anyone other than the Prophet: It's the exact translation of the word for Prophet in Islam, and Muhammad is declared the last Prophet, in the Quran! Every Muslim knows this verse: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the *Messenger* of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things." (Quran, 33:40).

The last straws

One day, when I was with Sheikheli and Badriyyeli, he showed us a letter, written by our first sister-wife, "Latifeli," to a Christian disciple in France, Soeur Véronique. Having heard a rumor, that her spiritual master had four wives, when she had been told that he had one, who was a virgin—naturally, she was upset. It didn't help that she was a Christian, and unused to the whole idea of polygamy; but what really bothered her was that she'd been led to believe (lied to) that her great spiritual master (who had a good number of Christian disciples too) was above being physically interested in women (my eye!) and had a pure marriage. So the first wife, who I loved and admired so much, replied, more or less like this: "You have done well to write to me... These are rumors which come from a naïve person... Having been his wife for twenty years, I know the Shaykh perfectly... these are spiritual unions, having nothing to do with contractual marriage." Then the last line was: "Man may be mistaken, but God is Witness to all things."

When Badriyyeli and I had finished reading that, I said, "But it's all lies!" My dear little cabbage was prudently silent; but he answered, "That doesn't matter: It solves the problem for all time to come." (You see, that letter would go not only to that one Christian disciple: Copies would be sent to all the Muqaddams, as was the custom with any letter to do with a potential criticism).

One thing I don't know, is why he always wanted to have the image of someone who was not interested in women. That is actually virulently anti-Sunnah,

65 Here are some titles, showing how the sublime has gotten into their side: *The Eye of the Heart*, by Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, by Frithjof Schuon, *The Heart of the Religio Perennis: Frithjof Schuon on Esoterism*, by Harry Oldmeadow, *The Elect and the Predestination of Knowledge, Esoterism and Exclusivism from A Schuonian Perspective*, by Timothy Scott, *A Sage for the Times: The Role and Oeuvre of Frithjof Schuon*, by Harry Oldmeadow, *The Milk of the Virgin*, by Renaud Fabbri.

because of a hadith: "Someone among them (among his Companions) said: I will not marry women; someone among them said: I will not eat meat; and someone among them said: I will not lie down in bed. He (the Holy Prophet) praised Allah and glorified Him, and said: What has happened to these people that they say so and so, whereas I observe prayer and sleep too; I observe fast and suspend observing them; I marry women also? And he who turns away from my Sunnah, he has no relation with Me."

وَحَدَّثَنِي أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ نَافِعٍ الْعَبْدِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا بَهْزٌ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ، أَنَّ نَفَرًا، مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم سَأَلُوا أَزْوَاجَ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنْ عَمَلِهِ فِي السِّرِّ فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لاَ أَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لاَ آكُلُ اللَّحْمَ . وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ لاَ أَنَامُ عَلَى فِرَاشٍ . فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى عَلَيْهِ . فَقَالَ " مَا بَالُ أَقْوَامٍ قَالُوا كَذَا وَكَذَا لَكِنِّي أُصَلِّي وَأَنَامُ وَأَصُومُ وَأُفْطِرُ وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي
(Sahih Muslim 16:1)

I'm assuming that had to do with his believing he was above Islam and its Prophet—that he was a Bodhisattva, and/or a Christic manifestation. In several ways, Jesus Christ was a temptation for him, because he always wanted to be highest. The only Prophet to return and rule the world alone, is Jesus in his Second Coming. Jesus is also called the Seal of Sanctity by Ibn Arabi.

When I read that sentence: "Man may be mistaken, but God is Witness to all things," I knew I had to get out of there, because the authority of God was lowered to serve the image she had lied about. But you'd never imagine what else I thought: I still thought they were all fine people, but more esoteric than me. *They* could lie: That didn't concern me; but being some lesser entity, I had to get out! A psychologist would call that a lack of self-esteem; but from a very different point of view, us wives, and many disciples, were just trying to be humble and submitted. We worked hard at it; the Shaykh profited in his worldly life; we were worshipping the wrong God, but our humility improved us a bit! Idolatry has modes: One mode is obeying those who allow what God had forbidden. I had no idea what was allowed or not, and followed the Shaykh, not God, because I thought he was the greatest knower of our Lord.

The implications of my leaving were immense. That meant I had to take myself out and away from the physical center of the Tariqah—leave family and friends, my means of livelihood, my house, built specially for me; divorce Sidi Abdul Ali (who had become fairly old—maybe 76, and who was not always well) *and* get a spiritual divorce from the Shaykh! That was a doozy of a decision!

But the absolutely worst thing was, that I could not tell a single soul *why*, because *no one* could criticize the Shaykh, who had always approved of lying—nor could anyone criticize my precious "Latifeli." She *was* the Government of, *and* the Queen of, the Tariqah. And I couldn't criticize the Shaykh to his

disciple and Na'ib, Sidi Abdul Ali either! So, they all assumed I wanted a sexier marriage. Later, I'd get quoted as saying, "I want a sweet little husband of my own," which I never said! That was on their minds, so it turned into words.

A raging megalomaniac!

One day towards the end, I had to be a translator for an interview. A certain Sayyidah Jamilah was coming to inform him of the complaints that many of the fuqara had against the Na'ib he had appointed for our town—a man who governed the Tariqah.

Well, the Shaykh wanted me to see her first and find out what the problems were and "inform" him, so he'd be prepared. I went and talked to her in a separate room; then I went upstairs. (He was always *up*, upstairs, up on a divan: All that was planned)! I told him it was going to be a very difficult interview, because she had come to inform him what all the different fuqara were saying against the Na'ib, who he himself had appointed to govern the Tariqah.

He looked at me with hatred. I'd never seen such a look on his face before, and I was scared, but not exactly for myself. Then he said that I had ruined his time between that time there, and the time she would come upstairs, by telling him that it would be a difficult interview. Well, I accepted that and just repented. We were all used to being scolded for our mis-judgements; but he kept the look of hatred on his face. Then I was looking at him, while he was shouting: "No one comes to inform me of anything! No one can teach me anything! No one needs to come and give me documentation or information on anything whatsoever! People come to see me only to hear the truth!"

I sat there watching him with this atrociously ugly look on his face, saying those things, and I remembered the long Shahadah. One says there is no god but God and then وحده لا شريك له ("and His Uniqueness has no partner to it"). He was saying that he knew everything, just like God!

What he was manifesting was that he was infallible, as infallible as God is. I didn't know it then; but way back before 1935, he had told some of his disciples: "*Il faut savoir que je suis infaillible*" ("It must be known that I am infallible"). Those words reached René Guénon who was appalled; but by 1947, Guénon was appalled by everything—having no idea how far such ideas could go on the human plane, and with women in particular. Spiritually, Guénon saw all the implications, and wrote a series of letters.[66] I half forgot about that day; but I'd remember the impression of actual megalomania I'd seen. I put it you know where; and kept it there for decades, until I was living on top of a little mountain, almost exactly on the other side of the world.

66 See Appendix II: Letters from René Guénon Concerning Frithjof Schuon.

"The Shaykh" did not *fear* God; but he had knowledge of spiritual realities. He is in the Hands of his Lord now, and I have not heard about his state when he died; but *caveat emptor*:[67] Do not follow people like him, ever! You will be responsible for yourself. And we should not condemn people, but try to love and forgive them all. God will sort them out later: The judging of us humans is up to Him alone. We must, however judge and condemn falsehood and poor character, line for line! That's why there are laws and a concept of justice.

PROOF

67 "Buyer beware," in Latin, which means that the one who makes the wrong choice is responsible.

PROOF

Chapter 18
My Sin

"I have been all things unholy. If God can work through me,
He can work through anyone."

St. Francis of Assisi

Saint or sinner?

Most people who write an autobiography, love talking about themselves. Me too! But with his usual knowledge of humility, Frithjof Schuon began his Memoirs, with words like, "Not from any desire of my own; but due to the oft-repeated requests of my friends..." He was someone who loved himself; but he sure knew how to cover that up, until, somehow, someone would get woken up!

When Frithjof Schuon began his Memoirs with those words of feigned humility, he was about to write and fulfill his friends' desires to learn about *his* greatness, not the greatness of Prophets or saints. You see, his was a *homo*-centric Tariqah; and *he* had created it that way; but a real Tariqah is *Deo*-centric, and there are more reasons to talk about oneself than what he had in mind.

Once someone with a lovely character listened to me tell him what a miserable time I was having somewhere; so, he told me how bad things had been for him once. My heart was comforted, because in his case as in mine, the aim was Divine Knowledge. I was grateful to hear about his life. That same man, told me a long and inspiring story about how hard, but also miraculous, had been his search for a spiritual master. One talks, as a truth-teller, about good or bad things, which are necessary for one's audience to know. The true and the

good, tend to communicate themselves: If you know something and want to do good—man! You talk! And if you're talking to people, most of whom have probably sinned, you admit to being one of them! Actually, Frithjof Schuon never admitted to having done anything wrong in his life, which was chock full of sins and insolence, rebellion against God. I want to be different. Anyway, a hadith says: "Allah Almighty said: O son of Adam, if you call upon Me and place your hope in Me, I will forgive you without hesitation. O son of Adam, if you have sins piling up to the clouds and then ask for My forgiveness, I will forgive you without hesitation. O son of Adam, if you come to Me with enough sins to fill the earth and then you meet Me without associating anything with Me, I will come to you with enough forgiveness to fill the earth." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3540).

Badriyyeli had totally replaced me, before she was even "in the house," because he was absolutely in love with her; I'd become nothing; but she had an idyllic magnanimity in all her ways, so we became a threesome, with triple hugs. Her house was the most beautiful one I'd seen (but simple and natural too, and I've seen a *lot* of lovely houses) so it was nice to be there, and all they did or said had beauty and intelligence. She was no genius: Sometimes I thought she needed her head examined; but she was bright, radiant, and had every talent in the world. To him, she was his personal embodiment of the heart of all spirituality. With her as such, no one else existed. I'm not exactly proud and certainly not a jealous type; but I did get bored to death after five years, and I thought I could be good for some other people.

He had done and said so much about her, that I was convinced none of us others were really his wives anymore. The definition of marriage was vague (none of us three non-legal wives had had anything resembling Muslim marriages with him either); He just *said* we were his wives, not concubines; but two of us lived with our legal husbands and pretended to be theirs in the outside world. Well, since he had abandoned all formality of law, I thought I could do the same... could become someone else's wife and everyone had become so elevated, intrinsic and good, that the whole community would realize that I'd been released, due to a higher good (that cabbage) so all was well: I could marry someone else.

In those days, no one except her could talk to him about anything delicate. He was old and had had several minor heart attacks, so we could no longer ask him for reassurance about our ideas. Much worse: We could not dispute with one another. But there was yet the worst: No one could criticize his beloved, new shakti. And, I couldn't tell Sayyidah Latifah, my usual mainstay, because I was sure that *she* wasn't really married to him anymore either! I'd never hurt her; she was his totally devoted wife, through thick and thin... a *lot* of thin.

There was a faqir, who seemed angelic. Well, half of him was loving, intelligent, artistic, poetic and musical, and he had plenty of originality and... I was

beginning to fall in love with him (madly, of course, because I was *way* out of kilter, feeling emotionally abandoned, at menopause and all in all unsurpassably in need of love¡). I didn't notice a detail about that man: He was half angel; but the *other* half was absolutely horrid! Still today, I can't abide to read things he's written: They're too ugly for words. He claims I told him many things that have some truth in them; but he added horrid distortions, and insidious insinuations. What he wrote made it sound as if I'd already left the Tariqah, when in fact, I still loved and believed in the Shaykh, and everyone meant the same to me as they always had.

I was also full of "incidents," stored you know where, and I thought any intelligent man could explain everything to me, so I confided in him—having no idea that he was a scandal-monger. In fact, I had no concept that anything so low existed. He was some trial for me! And my Lord let me fall flat on my face. There were surely countless reasons for that, and I do understand a few. I was committing idolatry, as we all were; but the only way to get me out was to bomb me out. I was so stubborn and faithful—ignorant too—that something had to destroy my pride and my whole equilibrium, before I'd feel forced back to the origins of Islam to try finding answers at the Source. There were no answers with *any* of those people!

While I was in love, I was still seeing the Shaykh as usual, and I still found him perfect. Life was complicated, but fine... until one night! My new intrinsic "husband" threatened to create a scandal if I didn't go back to his house at 1 am. I told Sidi Abdul Ali everything then. He said, "I'll beat him up!" He was serious, and I was glad to have him—loving him more that night. He sounded like a man for once; and I was frankly glad he blamed that blackmailer instead of his so-called wife, who he knew had been the Shaykh's wife for twenty some years. I had always been close to Sidi Abdul Ali; but he often showed the backbone of a jellyfish, so I was proud to be, in some way "his" that night.

The next day there was a scandal and I was in disgrace, in every single place. One woman saw me on a street, and hid behind a telephone pole. I couldn't tell anyone I had thought I wasn't married, and absolutely no one could criticize the Shaykh or his beloved new shakti, so there wasn't a word I could say to anyone. I had quite an intelligent and sensitive, adopted sister, named Ihsan, so I asked her to go for a walk—hoping I could think of some way to tell at least her; but she said she was busy that day, and I never saw her again in my life. As for my other adopted sister, I tried to tell her the tiniest thing wrong about Badriyyeli. She hung up, and I never saw her again either.

That was only the beginning though: That half angel, who I think was named Faisal, went to the police: He had seen naked dancing by Badriyyeli; and knew many outrageous things from me too, because I was confused by what I was seeing, and needed his advice.

Once he'd been present when the Shaykh had been in the center of a circle of women—wives of his disciples, and several of their daughters. They were dancing around him, naked to the waist, and when the music changed, he embraced them all—holding them against his bare chest. Due to that, the man, named Sidi Faisal, filed a police complaint for child molestation. There was a Grand Jury Hearing against him, and the news of that went all around the world. Sidi Faisal caused that; his other name was Mark Koslow; and he alerted the entire world!

There was nothing that looked at all like child abuse or child molestation—contrary to many horrible "scandal sheets." Frithjof Schuon hadn't the slightest sexual interest in children: He loved femininity and beautiful women. If they were a bit young, they were still lovely to him, and three quite young girls were embraced; they just happened to be there. Apparently the scene was more sexual-seeming than what I thought; but there was, as usual, a beautiful and very sacred-*seeming* element in every move. The scandal-mongers saw with *their* eyes. The rest of us saw things done in a sacred *manner*; but this is the whole point and yet impossible to describe.

Anyway, I'd become lost to the Shaykh as a wife; and I thought I wasn't married to Sidi Abdul Ali either, so in my opinion now, awful as it was, God was letting me go astray, with a higher purpose, and not abandoning me at all. I fell madly in love with that angel, who was an incredibly ambiguous type: He had everything I loved, and everything I'd not be able to fathom too. My being fascinated with people hadn't opened any door towards the lower types of us creatures, so I was totally taken aback and couldn't believe what I saw. He could be *low*; and I saw that, but avoided drawing conclusions. I've always had a problem with *believing* ill, not with *seeing* it.

Needing love, having been emotionally abused, being bored to the utmost, and at a woman's change of life, I did not *want* to see anything but good. So I didn't, until he became morbidly jealous—both of the Shaykh, who I'd never stopped loving in my usual way, *and* of Sidi Abdul Ali. I'd really loved Sidi Abdul Ali the whole time—never un-loving anyone actually, just adding others. Maybe I'm hard to understand, because I love people so much that I can love many people at the same time, in various ways and at different levels. Detesting unfaithfulness too, I try to never leave anyone when most people would. Whereas Hamideli had a stiff relationship with her ex-husband, I was quite normally affectionate with Sidi Abdul Ali, as if he were my brother or a friend in childhood.

Sometimes, Sidi Faisal would say something unbelievably ignoble, ugly or I don't know what; but I was so out of kilter that I paid no attention. Anyway, you'll notice: Sometimes, my lights are on, but nobody's home. I see things fine; but can't *believe* them! "Sammy" used to say, "Maudie, not all elevators go all the way to the top," and "You didn't get the best tool in the shed!"

Once, when I was at his house, I said I was cold. He said he'd only turn on the heating if I paid for it. Another time he showed me something he had written about the people in "the family:" It was so horribly distorted and ugly, that I both dismissed and forgot it. You know what that meant by now: Yes, back there in my storage place it went! I can't say "up in the attic:" That's too high up!

Well-loved again

"Promises are like the full moon: If they are not kept at once they diminish day by day." (German proverb)

The Shaykh was guilty, and should have been convicted by the Grand Jury; we all knew that, but we lied about several things, as instructed by the Shaykh, whose orders came through Xyz, the lawyer-in-charge. Most importantly, that Sidi Faisal had accused the Shaykh of embracing those bare-breasted young girls, on a certain date. He was wrong about the date! Those girls were proven to have been out of town or somewhere else! In addition, there were political or administrative issues, maybe undue pressure from our prominent fuqara—that part was beyond me and complicated.

Well, one day, after the trial was over, and that scandal-monger Sidi Faisal was out of my life, Sayidah Badriyyah came to see me. She said that the Shaykh had forgiven me for having had an affair. He said it was just an accident, since I hadn't known if I were still his wife or not, and he wanted me to come back, and be, as ever, his wife: Nothing had changed, forget it! I assumed he would tell the Bloomingtonians that too. Life would come back, and she said I should go see the two of them on Thursday as usual. Badriyyeli had changed *totally*, and instantaneously: She always did that when she found out that the Shaykh had a new idea. Anyway, I wrote them both a sweet note, saying that I'd stay, faithful as ever... not move away and never ever divorce anyone—happy as a flower in the Spring! Then I went to see them, and they greeted me with a wide, magnanimous, triple hug. (Actually I would like quadruple hugs and multiple hugs with everybody, or at least everybody good in the world).

We had an ineffably idyllic visit, and they were both the way they'd been five years before. She did some kind of a dance for him and for me which was absolutely... I can't say charming, because it was so sacred-seeming; but it was dignified and happy at the same time. Then she sort of took one leap and managed to land in both our laps—a symbol of the magnanimous threesome that we had been for the first five years or so of her being in our lives. They were *both* genial for something. What? Maybe it was charisma; but it sure appeared to be love!

Then she left me alone with him for a long time. While she was upstairs, he told me that the reason that I had had an affair was only that he didn't have the

psychic energy to pay attention to both of us. He didn't apologize; he never did that; but I accepted the reason and understood perfectly. He was over 85 by then. I left happy and thought they would arrange it so the community would forgive me too. Everything would be peace, love, and high understanding.

The next time I had an appointment at her house, they told me she was taking him to somebody else's house, because there were some faqirat who wanted to see him naked for *darshan* (blessing). So they planned to have a brief tea with me and then leave. Fine: I had tea with the two of them and they left. They didn't bother inviting me, because they knew I wasn't interested in that kind of thing anymore. The two of them had the idea that his body was sacred and seeing him with his private parts was beyond anything divine, so there were some women there that would like to come and see him. They had practised how he would be seated, so all of him could be seen; but he'd seem to be in a holy "stance."

I didn't think anything of it because I too thought he was an Avataric phenomenon. All right, so I left after we'd had tea for half an hour. Then I came back the next time and my visit lasted *less* than half an hour. We had a brief teatime, and off they went to show him to some other young faqirat.

That time I'd had it! I thought their taking me back and forgiving me, going back to our normal relationship of the first five years wasn't sincere. They had taken me back; but they didn't want to pay any attention to me at all. I didn't require much, and even put up with this talking to me about nothing but her... I'd become used to that. But this was too much. After that second time when we only had tea, I was finished with those two—at least as far as being in a marriage, with her in it, was concerned. She could have him! I'd have been delighted with a thousand concubines, but not that one! *Maybe*, we could all go back to being best friends?

Finally, I wrote Sheikheli and Badriyyeli another little note, on another lovely card, saying I would move a bit out of the center, into my own house. I still loved everyone just the same; but wanted to be out of the center and have a life, outside the center of the Tariqah.

My legal divorce from Sidi Abdul Ali, would be finished in court on the 30th of March, 1992, and I'd be moving into a new house that I had found—a dear little house where I wanted them all to visit me for small majalis. I had already asked the Shaykh to give me a spiritual divorce, before the court trial. He had said that he could not do that, because he was a Bodhisattva (!), and so he could not cause division. Albeit, I'd accepted that once, I decided to shelve it: I'd leave anyway: I was done in, done for and outdone!

Being a first prize idiot, I thought I could keep perfect relationships with all of them, be his friend and devoted disciple, *and* live outside the center. So, the moment I was settled, I invited my former family to dinner and for our usual small kind of majlis-evening. My heart was full of hope, and everything

was perfect. Of course, I had a kitten, and he was *irresistible!* The Shaykh saw him pounce out from behind a pretty plant, and said, "*Donnervetter!*" (Thunder weather, in German) as he always did, when something fine and astonishing happened. It was one of his childlike expressions.

When they left, I was so happy, and trusting that I could go on with my spiritual life, but without those crazy marriages. Although I only had enough money to live for a year, I thought I'd work or marry again, and was trusting in God for everything. (You will see that I was right to trust in Him, absolutely right; but I was wrong about what He willed).

After that evening, I never saw any of them again, in any real way: Latifeli did visit me a few times; but she said he had been sick ever since he'd been at my new house, because he knew I shouldn't be there, but rather back where I'd been! It was my fault, she said; but no it was the fault *of all of them* that I'd had to leave; but I couldn't say so. And Latifeli's lying letter had been a last straw; but I didn't reproach her.

Oh! Sidi Abdul Ali visited me for awhile and told me he'd always love me, no matter what, and that he had never divorced me spiritually: We were still married, he said; and he wanted to marry me again... legally or how, I didn't ask; but when I tried to tell him what my dearest friend was doing, he yelled, "Do not criticize Sayyidah Badriyyah!" She was quite near to God, I mean *high up*, like the Shaykh. They flew high together!

Being quite mixed up about everything, I finally told Sidi Abdul Ali that I had some larger problem—so he said I was too worldly (I guess thinking I wanted to marry a younger man, which should have been normal if true, but it wasn't). Oh la la! Then I had to *look* for another husband, because I didn't have enough money to survive for long: That made them all the more convinced that I was a froward woman. Everything was a mess, including me: I did and said things I'd rather not tell even you!

Before my legal divorce had gone through, Badriyyeli told me that she was going for a walk with a different faqirah everyday, telling them that the Shaykh and she did not approve of *my divorcing Sidi Abdul Ali!* But I'd been divorced from him for over 20 years! Finally, I went to the Shaykh's house. I told Latifeli that if the Shaykh didn't approve of my divorcing Sidi Abdul Ali, then I wouldn't. She went upstairs to tell him that, then came down saying I should do whatever I wanted to. Knowing that he was being a sheer hypocrite (but shelving that with the rest) I just divorced Sidi Abdul Ali and moved away—so nervously devastated though, that I could hardly stand up. That made applying for jobs impossible.

My cabbage finished off my ancestors too: She said I'd fallen due to degeneration in my family; but the Shaykh had said her mother was a high caste person. That's what he'd said about *my father*, who he never saw again. Really, she did a thorough job on me!

My father, Sammy, with his own kind of genius, summed up the whole marriage and divorce episode:

There was an old geezer from Kent,
Who lived with his yak in a tent.
When folks asked, 'Does it bite?'
He said, 'Only at night,
And I save a small fortune in rent.'

Einstein, with his genius, summed it up too. He said, "Two things are infinite: The universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe!"

PROOF

Chapter 19
Hell on Earth

"Stop the World – I Want to Get Off!"
Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley,
A musical with a book, music, and lyrics

Back to zero

After my former family left my dear little house after the perfect evening, I was going to be in very hot water, and for a long time. It took me ages to realize it; but the Shaykh and Badriyyeli had totally forgiven me, and said my sin was only an accident—because my sin was, in effect, a testimony of his love for Badriyyeli. Well, I thought they had told the whole Tariqah to forget my sin, like *they* had forgiven it. Everyone remembered or forgot, due to a sentence from either of them. Well, after the perfectly fine-*seeming* evening at my new house, all the parameters changed! But I didn't realize it, and when I don't "see" something, you're looking at 30 years of incomprehension!

The entire society, and all of those in my family, changed the story: Now I was forever guilty, and even 30 years later, not one person would see me. I was considered responsible for the actual words of Sidi Faisal! They say today that it was because of *my talking about it*, that the Shaykh had nearly gone to jail, and had a bad reputation throughout the Muslim world. Well no: It was because of what the Shaykh had actually *done* that he nearly went to jail. That wasn't allowed in American society's rules, and it wasn't allowed in any Muslim school of law either! The Tariqah was decimated by Sidi Faisal's garbled reports of things he'd seen, because his written report and news of the Grand Jury

Hearing, went all over the world—I mean the news really did go everywhere! Sidi Faisal (Mark Koslow) sort of did the world a favor; but what he wrote was too "ugly" for many to believe. The books of Frithjof Schuon were, and still are, exceedingly well-regarded. His newly invented, high esoterism is a big temptation for those who don't know enough about Islam or about his private life.

Court for me, with Sidi Xyz

One day, the lawyer-faqir Xyz, claiming I was dangerous, had me handcuffed and called into court, for walking on my former road. The reason they thought I was dangerous (and had become insane) was that I'd written a nice letter to Sidi Abdul Ali, in which I made a joke about six-shooter guns. It was a stupid joke; not easy to get, and I admit it; but even Sidi Abdul Ali was expressing concern about my mental condition. Everything was due to an astounding capacity to underestimate people: I'd move, and they'd say "Blackmail."

Well, my new kitten was so naughty that I couldn't discipline him in the usual gentle ways, so I had a very cute water gun—with all colors; and it was childlike looking. I filled it with water and into my purse it went! They were so reactionary that I didn't care what I did anymore, and I thought I'd soak that lawyer with a good dose of water in the back of his neck when we all left the courtroom. On the way in, I had to pass through security guards, who saw that contraption; but they just smiled.

The judge, a grumpy old goose, put the letter I'd written in front of me.

"What is that?" he asked, pointing to the joke about six shooters.

"It's a joke, told (in a way) by Judy Garland, in *The Harvey Girls*," I answered, (forgetting that they never watched films). And I honestly hadn't intended it; but I couldn't resist the opportunity, so I added, "But I do have a gun in my purse!"

Sayyidah Latifah was there and turned pale, as did the lawyer Xyz and the bailiff, who was ordered to fetch my purse. When the judge saw my water gun, he said, "Miz Murray, we are not amused!" I couldn't care less about anything at that point. Then he said he hesitated about filing a Protective Order against me.

"I think you should: I'm dangerous," I said. Then he declared it, banged down his gavel and said, "Case closed!"

Everyone (Latifeli and Xyz) stood up. But there was one witness, way back in the room: My father. He stood up too, and shouted: "You better run! She's gonna get you!"

If I hadn't done things like that, I think I would have lost my mind due to far too much tension. My father was indispensable too. Never could I have survived without all his fatherly love and humor, lifelong. I can't say he understood

much; but I wouldn't meet people who would truly be understanding for decades. Those are worth the world and everything in it!

Bad day at black rock

I *still* had not given up on explaining everything to the Shaykh, because he was so generally intelligent and reasonable. He had also treasured me as his favorite person on earth, for decades—telling the fuqara that I had a perfect character; was a saint even; and we had confided everything in one another. Although he had adored me, and said he'd never take another wife, I was not "in love" with him; but his love was so touching that I had deep feelings for him. His love was actually genial, like most aspects of his intelligence and personality. Oh, I know! He had a *tremendous* amount of charisma! And that came on full force when he was in love; but he had the heart of an artichoke—giving a leaf to each one. He wasn't really close to any men, and as far as women were concerned, he always dropped them when another one came. He was a monogamous man!

Back to the story. Having already been handcuffed and hauled into court several times, I wasn't just anxious to go through that trouble again, and there was a legal Protective Order on file against me. If I walked on Inverness Farm Road, I'd be back in court, and maybe end up in jail. The Shaykh refused to see me; but years had passed and his love for me had been totally destroyed by my dear little cabbage.

Being sure that he'd remember the love we'd had for one another, if he only heard my voice, I cooked up a plan. Instead of walking to his house on the road, I'd start out before sunrise and walk miles through the woods, coming up through the woods behind his house. Once there, I sat down peacefully on the grass which was full of wildflowers. I called out to him, knowing he could hear me perfectly well, saying several times: "Sheikheli (Dear little Shaykh) I need to talk to you: There are misunderstandings skyscrapers high!"

Soon I was surprised: The professionally trained watchdog of my last sister-wife, was running towards me! So that meant Sayyidah Latifah was away, and Sayyidah Badriyyah was staying in that house, with her dog, named Mato! I had no idea what watchdogs actually do; but was prepared to be bitten, eaten or anything; so I stayed put and addressed him by name, which didn't seem to impress him at all. He sniffed me, circled around, and then went away. Later I found out: Trained dogs are taught to leave people alone unless they try to run away. In that case, they put their teeth around an arm, and lower the person to the ground.

Once he had ambled off, I saw two of my former best friends talking some way away on the edge of some woods. Next came the sound of a siren. Two policemen came up to me, handcuffed me, and put me into the back of their

police wagon. I almost burst out laughing: It was padded! (Like for violent and insane criminals). Off we went. Totally detached (because it was too insane then to get interested in) I called out (in Arabic) "Oh Maryam, peace be upon thee. Oh Merciful God, Oh Compassionate God." Those were words we used to say or sing, being a greeting of peace to the Virgin Mary, to whom the Tariqah was dedicated, plus the two Merciful Names of God.

That time I didn't just get hauled into court: I was ushered into a "cell" in the jail! Surprisingly, that looked pretty good: I had a little room to myself, and it had a window through which I saw only the lovely blue sky. Another window looked into the lobby, and soon I saw a bookmobile arriving! I could stay in there for the rest of my life, memorize the Quran, study the Bible a lot, have privacy and not need to work! That seemed *so* good, that I didn't ask my father to bail me out. Anyway, he was poor, so paying $500 bail would be hard, and I had great hopes: *Maybe* this was the hermitage willed by God?

Lunchtime came around, and I'd expected room service: A tray brought to my room—hopefully even with coffee. But no: All us jailbirds had to eat at one table downstairs. Since I was new, they had me introduce myself and tell my story, and then each one told hers. That did it! I could not abide those people and wanted out. I went straight to the phone booth, and by nightfall my dream of a peaceful life in jail was over. It would be some time before I'd find anything that seemed so good though. From childhood on, I'd always wanted a little place alone, and out of the world: That had meant in the woods, on a hill, in a closet—even in jail.

Chapter 20
A Cat Abandoned by the Side of the Road

"Always passed over, eighteen years old,
I was loved by my owner, then dumped in the cold.
When he died and left me, scared and alone,
His relatives didn't want me in their home."
An old cat's story, by Sarah Hartwell

I lost everything!

It was as if I didn't even have a father to protect me. Since I'd become a Muslim and become subject to a Shaykh, "Sammy" didn't even know *when* I got "married" to my "spiritual master" much less under what conditions. As for my mother, she died alone, as it was not possible to live with her anywhere near the Tariqah; and as for the education that "Sammy 'n Frances" had sold all they had to give me, it was useless. My Harvard B.A. degree didn't count anymore in finding a job. Two Master's degrees didn't count either. I had a bunch of excellent recommendations; but they were much too old. Of people, there was no one alive to recommend me: All my former friends and adopted family had rejected me due to my having made a dreadful "mistake," which the "Shaykh" had called "an accident" and forgiven; but he hadn't told anyone that *I* finally left *him*, after *he* wanted me back. He could not abide the slightest slight, even though I'd left with loving faithfulness.

When the Shaykh "married" me, I was young and charming; but when I left the center of the "Tariqah," all that counted was the things I just mentioned, which I had no more! This has happened to many women, in all religions and groups. Some have written books blaming a religion. Then people who are opposed to whatever religion that was, rejoice in enmity—an all-round *bad and dumb* reaction on all sides! I want everyone to see that when one trusts in God, He forgives and is faithful. And God practically talked to me, leading me out of darkness into light. When I couldn't or wouldn't think, He taught me.

No way!

When I left, I'd known that I only had enough money to survive for a year, unless I found a job or married someone who could support me, and that would be new! I'd always had to support myself and/or a man. In Bloomington, Sidi Abdul Ali and I hadn't enough to live on from his pension, so I had to do things to earn extra, while he absolutely refused to do anything, not even to teach English to friends' children, from the day he had retired, in Switzerland. He also chose the most expensive of options for himself, but I never complained. After being married for three days, I'd decided that I had to let him be the boss, or not be married.

I tried everything; but at first I was too weak nervously to stand up for long. Then, when I absolutely had to work, no one would hire me: I had no one recent or near to recommend me, hadn't worked for 15 years since we left Switzerland, and the worst: I wasn't used to a computerized workplace. After many tries, I finally had to live in people's houses, as a nanny, housekeeper and cook.

A dreadful disadvantage was that I had committed perjury under orders, to protect the Shaykh from being convicted in the Grand Jury Hearing, so I had a criminal record. To get very low-paid, live-in jobs, most potential employers demanded a drug test and a criminal records search! Although I'd repented thoroughly, I was nervous as a cat; and that kept me from thinking! *If* I'd had a single friend left, he or she would have reminded me and told me what it meant: The charges against Sayyidah Badriyyah and me had been dropped, as being irrelevant to the case. I had no criminal record; but I thought I did, so sometimes I told people before they hired me! Still, I was always afraid that those I didn't tell would find out about what wasn't there!

For two years, I served in different houses, and was often humiliated by being considered to be of quite an inferior class. Actually that didn't bother me. What *was* upsetting was the people who hired me—albeit their children were usually delightful. Seeing more families, ways of life and problems was interesting, and I often lived in lovely places; but always ended up not being able to stand the people. And sometimes, they didn't like or want me.

Once I was supposedly a servant, housecleaner and gourmet cook for an old couple, who lived in a gorgeous country place, near a lake. The people were impossible; but I can get along with practically anyone, and the countryside suited me perfectly.

They dressed me in an apron and once invited the wealthiest couple in town to dinner. Since they wouldn't let me buy flowers, I went into the fields and made gorgeous bouquets of wildflowers for every room—transforming the whole dull, but wealthy-looking house into a fine home. I quite liked the guests and the lady asked me in an aside how they found me, as they wanted a servant too. Well, I told her a bit of why I had to take such a job; but you know what? I actually took to being a servant like a duck takes to water! I loved that place!

My bosses told me about a mysterious old woman, who had lived alone for decades, in a tiny cabin tucked away in the woods. She had no electricity or anything that anyone knew of; and there were big snowstorms there, near Nashville, Indiana. On my day off, I walked for what seemed like miles through woods and meadows—being sure to pick at least one of every wildflower: I was going to visit her. I knocked on her door, and there she was—a very nice, neat and clean, old-fashioned and simple lady. She really loved the flowers and was obviously delighted to have a guest; so in I went to hear the story of her life. Ages ago, her good husband had died; but she had kept up their cabin impeccably; and was bravely living out her life alone. I saw her bed, so neatly made; but covered with a bedspread as old as she was. Although we were so different, I told her some of my life's story too; and at one point she interrupted me: "I ain't goin in none a dem planes!" she exclaimed. I walked home, happy to have met her, and to have seen "what was on the other side of the wall."

Every day, I had to clean the entire house; but the lady was always implying that she wanted major works done—like thoroughly cleaning the entire basement—so I opened all the windows, washed them on both sides, and cleaned or repaired everything down there. The next day, I saw a beautifully colored snake in there. Where we lived, the most beautiful snakes were known to be poisonous! And the elderly wife was almost blind! After hours of calling and running here and there, we got an emergency service to come and get it; but the next day, I had no job!

Another time, I got fired for being too interesting: I had shown children how to put on a play for their parents, and we had moved furniture in the basement to make a stage. The next day, the parents told me they only wanted their usual routines—nothing that involved moving anything, although they'd enjoyed the play. Fired again.

Then I was a gourmet cook (not really; but they bought such good food that it wasn't hard). Still, once I put too much sauce on the fish. The two people I worked for, if you believe in astrology, were both Libras. If you don't

believe that, then call them perfectionists. I wrote them a note of apology for the overly sauced fish, and then showed them that I respected their human types: They loved balance in everything. Soon I was fired again; but the man of the house said I'd written quite an intelligent letter—"by accident!"

Although those two years seemed to be a low point, I benefited greatly from being around children, who sure kept me from being sad. My rooms were always private, and there was often countryside around. All that time I told you about above, pinched-souled old people were my clients; but the surroundings were divine!

Somehow, I had discovered that The Islamic Society of North America was not too far away, so I went to a few lectures on Islam. Those weren't interesting; but I picked up brochures. In one, there was a paragraph written by an American Jew, about why she had become a Muslim. Strangely, she wrote word-for-word what I would have said! I wrote my first letter to Maryam Jameelah—having no idea how well-known her books were; and of course, how could I know we'd become best friends. I forget how we became a threesome, with Elizabeth Siddiqui; but the three of us became close for years, mostly by mail. We were three American women, all of whom had accepted Islam. We were about the same age, had become Muslims in our twenties and agreed on nearly everything. Elizabeth Siddiqui is better known by her pseudonyms, Suzanne Haneef and Marianne Kazi, and under that last name, she wrote *Adhan over Anatolia*. Due to hearing the amazingly beautiful call to prayer (the Adhan) when traveling through Turkey (Anatolia) she had studied Islam and then became a Muslim. Actually, that's an illustration of Plato's dictum, "Beauty is the splendor of the true." The Truth of a religion *does* radiate into a beauty which is great enough to say, in effect: "The religion from which this beauty comes, has to be True!"

Once I thought of you

Really, I did think of you all once, quite concretely: I had nothing to do for awhile; was too weak nervously to work yet, and figured I'd find out something for everyone to come after me, so I investigated *all* the psychics, who are commonly available. After a long time of talking, making and un-making friends, exchanging letters, being quite open to believing anything until proven otherwise... After all that, I found out: About 99% of them are total fakes, and want both money and power. Power over you, and your money. The others deal with spirits, know some things, and add their own ideas, exactly the way the Prophet of Islam said. I "met" one nice young lady, who knew some "white magic;" but it is infinitely better to only trust in the Lord. A hadith says: "I was shown the nations, (of believers going to Paradise) ...'Look there, and there, on the horizons of the sky.' There was a multitude filling the horizons. It was

said, 'This is your ummah, and of these, seventy thousand will enter Paradise without being brought to account… They are the ones who do not seek ruqya, do not believe in bad omens and do not use branding; they *put their trust in their Lord*…'"

Now I take medicine, when I'm pretty sure it was discovered by man's God-given intelligence (not when it has such dreadful side-effects that only people with no faith in the Afterlife would want to use it to stay alive). And when there's a problem, I pray and accept His Will. Indeed, there are tragedies in this world; but we have been promised more good than we can imagine as compensation.

Dear people

After I'd been out of the Tariqah in my house trailer for a while, I had the idea to start my own television program, partly because I am friendly, but I also wanted to teach people everything I'd learned so far. Believe it or not, I managed to make my own television program. At that time, it wasn't too hard in the United States, as you could buy several video cameras and TV screens, and film yourself. Although I don't know if anybody did it except me, there were other people on public access TV; but most of them paid someone to film them. I managed to video myself speaking and I gave lectures in a series called "Dear People." I shared everything I knew with the people and invited them to my house, hospitably showing them my prisms and kaleidoscope, and telling them things about light, the way I'm trying to share things with you through this book.

I had a good time; but finally one day in court, the fuqara, under the guidance of Sidi Xyz, accepted a deal: They would have Frithjof Schuon listen to a video that I had made in which I would talk to him directly with a witness present, and he would sign a paper saying that he had seen and heard it, if I would stop the TV program. They also offered me $10,000 to leave town. It wasn't half enough, since my father and I couldn't have gotten anywhere with that. Moving was much too big a problem.

I did accept to stop having that TV program, but rather loved talking to people everywhere—the "in general," all-inclusive kind of people, and not only an élite. When I'd go in the grocery store, I'd meet people, who said they saw me on TV and liked my program; and some people came to visit me. Aside from being spiritual, I really identify as being *human*: Maybe that's why I love almost everyone and feel like writing for you all. One day I apologized to the whole city for having lied in court. I always do everything for everybody, so I said I was apologizing for myself, and for all of my people, for having lied. Later, I gathered that "my people" didn't like my apologizing, as they'd never admit they'd lied.

Then, on TV, I said that *as* an ordinary faqirah, not with any authority, I was declaring the Tariqah Maryamiyyah closed. So there I was, having declared it defunct, as a nobody. *However*, Maryam, the Blessed Virgin, was in the name of that Tariqah! I would not abandon, or slight her in any way. So: Due to "*al-adab ul-ilahiyyah*" (courtesy towards God... and what is holy) in the next second, I said that the Tariqah was reopened as declared by me—again as a nobody. And yet again, in sheer desperation, I said I was reopening it and renaming it the "Tariqah Maryamiyyah *As-Salihah*."

That added word "As-Salihah" (الصالحة) means two things: The *reformed* Tariqah Maryamiyyah and the *virtuous* Tariqah Maryamiyyah. There was an Arab reformer-Prophet, who is one of a few Arabian Prophets, who are not in the Bible. His name was "Salih," which means virtuous and reforming—in profound ways. I had said that the Tariqah was closed due to lack of virtue and I reopened it as a new, reformed, virtuous Tariqah. Now, I don't know to this day if I was crazy or not. I suspect my whole idea was outrageous; but I'm talking about it for the record. What in the world is an ordinary human being supposed to do in such a situation? That's maybe a question for Gnostics!

I can—but only now—tell you what some *scholars* would say. At the time, I had no idea that there were *doctrinal* errors: I only saw character faults all over the place. In summary, what I saw was that everything stemmed from pride: Frithjof Schuon was *above* every law that prescribes virtue. He was a sophisticated, highly gifted and aristocratic megalomaniac—so lovely in his chameleon camouflages, that us nearest disciples stopped thinking!

Little did I know that fine scholars and true spiritual masters, all over the world, were seeing what I saw too, but in *doctrine*. One scholar (I bless him in my prayers) is Gregory A. Lipton, who wrote a book called *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*. After I'd been through a "Hell on earth," I about died of delight, reading a few paragraphs by him. Here's a passage:

> "Thus, Schuon's assignment of the Virgin to the supreme cosmic position qua mother of the prophets in tandem with his *self-identification* with Aryan metaphysical 'purity' in essence makes her the mother of all of humanity and all races, thus positioning her—*and thereby Schuon*—prior to and thus *above* the limiting factors of race, authorizing him to take up the *self-determined* position of 'the human instrument for the manifestation of the Religio perennis at the end of time'—that is, the ultimate arbiter and interpreter of religious 'Truth' ('with that capital T...'" (from *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*, by Gregory A. Lipton, p. 147). [My italics].

I sent that quote to Murayyim, the daughter of my second-sister wife. Remember, I met her when she was 12: She was brought up living next door to "the Shaykh." Like me, she began understanding Gregory Lipton's (so far) major work, *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*, with something he wrote that was simpler.

Here's her comment (and you can see whose daughter she is: Her parents were both brilliant):

> "Thank you for sharing. I felt I needed to read more to understand Lipton's point, and today I found a 2017 article of his, entitled *De-Semitizing Ibn ʿArabī: Aryanism and the Schuonian Discourse of Religious Authenticity.* So I was able to read a well-constructed argument, showing how Schuon was an heir to German Romanticism (which he would readily admit) but also to anti-Semitic 'Aryan' thinkers such as Renan and even Chamberlain (which I doubt he would admit). This heritage is western, or a European projection onto Hindu sacred texts and universalism, capturing this universalism for European white esoterists and opposing it to Ibn Arabi's 'exoteric,' Islamo-centrist esoterism. Very interesting. I had never thought of Schuon in this light, which makes sense to me. I know that I am in great part a product of my culture and environment, so why wouldn't he be in some essential part, despite all he could say to the contrary! His discourse reflects previous discourses in many ways, which makes him less 'original.'"

Her mother, Barbara Perry or Sayyidah Hamidah said that while she was reading an article by the Shaykh on Bodhisattvas, she suddenly understood that he was in fact writing about himself. Henceforth, she saw him as a Bodhisattva![68]

When people get proud, no matter how genial they are, they cannot think straight beyond a certain point: Women, wives, scholars—all figure him out. From all angles, he had made himself great. However, although he claimed to be *the* representative of Truth on earth, he was actually blatantly subjective! When I asked him to divorce me spiritually, he said (in a court's legal record) that he could not divorce me, because he was a "Bodhisattva" and could not "cause division." But he caused divisions right and left whenever he felt like it! There are countless examples; but he took his fourth wife from her young husband, who adored her and was absolutely heart-broken. I had an idea for another wife for him, and that turned out beautifully; but Frithjof Schuon had not a word of sympathy for his own disciple. And he had planned to have Murayyim as his fourth wife, when she was married to a Moroccan—so all his Moroccan disciples left. Whenever he felt criticized or even only slighted, he sure did cause division too! Disciples like myself were separated from their parents; fuqara were cut off from fine Muslims. He was a cutter-offer, not one who couldn't cause division at all: He just knew how to use words!

68 He said he was a Bodhisattva. That's even in a legal court file; but he was a *self-determined* Bodhisattva, just as Lipton wrote above that he was a "*self-determined* human instrument for the manifestation of the Religio Perennis at the end of time"—that is, the ultimate arbiter and interpreter of religious "Truth" (Gregory A. Lipton, *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*, p. 147). [My italics].

Xyz wanted to get rid of me!

Sidi Xyz got tired of my "Dear People" TV show. Of course, because I was saying who had lied, and he got a prize for lying; but I was also trying to reform the Tariqah in public—all else having failed; but it was a secret society.[69] Even after the court case in which he led us all through with lies; Xyz called my father to inform him that I had never really been married to the Shaykh, that I had lied! That was so absurd, but typical: Xyz was a sycophant. He would do or say, file a case, help or throw out—whatever and whoever the Shaykh said, wanted or liked. Oh dear: That's a perfect example of one of the modes of idolatry; and I wish I could have talked to him and been heard.

He and they were tired of me; but I never tired of trying to get my spiritual master back. Every time I had tried to talk to the Shaykh, he had let Xyz "take care of me," the way he did with other enemies; but I did not *want to be an enemy*, and was ready to die (literally) before giving him up... quite in spite of everything. My attitude was actually, spiritually perfect (Hahyhu: I behaved so as not to cause divisions with anyone, in every way possible, like a Bodhisattva)! An "unsurpassable spiritual master" is so valuable that one should accept endless trials—wanting nothing in the cosmos except such a person. Many of you won't have a clue as to what I'm talking about: Nevermind. Others will see what I mean later, and in the Bibliography. Not that I had words for it at the time, I only had the attitude of Milarepa, a great Tibetan Buddhist, whose biography is in the Bibliography.

The lawyers (I think there were six, or it seemed to me, and Xyz was one)... well, their office made me an offer: They'd pay me $10,000 to pick up my dear little father-puss, stop that TV program, and move somewhere else. I couldn't go anywhere with him in those days for that much, so I proposed ten times that. Then they didn't want to talk anymore.

That wasn't surprising; but I made them another offer: I would stop talking, for nothing, if that law office would play a video of my talking, to the Shaykh. Then I could explain my side of what had gone wrong to him "in person," even though he had refused to see me ever since the lovely evening at my dear little house—years before—the house I'd spent most of my money on. I bought it so I could have a place to invite him to, with all my former, but still well-loved family members. Most of the Bloomingtonians knew I had been his wife by then too, so I wanted them to think he was noble and had put me in that dear house—gracefully freed of my marital bonds, because we all knew he now had that final, supreme shakti, Badriyyeli, loved by all.

69 Lying is devastating spiritually. Don't quote me; but I think it means you are not a Muslim: That means that a supposed Muslim dies with no religion! Here's what God says in the Quran: "Only they forge the lie who do not believe in the signs of Allah." (Quran 16:105). It was because of verses and hadith, that I tried to warn Xyz once to save his life. His wife said he was away: I thought she was lying, but what could I say?

After making them that offer (which they'd accepted) I was sitting at a big table in the courthouse, with lots of lawyers opposite me. I didn't have a lawyer of course.

Well, in my offer, I had said that the *secretary* in the lawyers' office must be a witness. I was sort of familiar with her by then: She was a normal human—not at all related to anything. So there I sat, looking at those characters, who proposed a change: They wanted one of themselves to be the witness, and not that young lady.

I saw their eyes, and I'm smarter than I may look: I saw perfectly well *why* they did not want that young lady. A so-called lawyer "witness" would replace her, and that lawyer was going to lie. The Shaykh would never see my defence. I weighed that inside myself, and I saw that their eyes were intent: They wanted to take advantage of my generosity and naïvety. I prayed and just decided to leave them up to God. If they wanted to lie, He would know what to do with them and with me. So I accepted their offer, and had to cancel my dear TV show. *Now* those "Dear People" are you!

PROOF

Chapter 21
The Flying Religion

"A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."

C. S. Lewis

High like God

You see, the Shaykh had us all convinced that he was like God, way up high; his teachings were revealed like the Quran, his Sunnah was like the Sunnah of Muhammad (no, it was *better* for *these days;* but the Quran says God's Words never change). His whole idea of Perennialism or the Religio Perennis (although full of true aspects) was just plain too high. *It was*, *in effect*, *another religion*, *revealed to him*, *because he was so, so great!*

Remember: Once someone asked him if his six themes of meditation were in the Quran? He replied, exactly: "I don't care what is in *any* book!" That was because, as I overheard it later, he and Sayyidah Latifah thought that the one who asked the question did not know what Intellectual Intuition was. No. The problem was that *they* did not know that all knowledge, genius, intellection, visions... all that is, is subject to God and His Word. The one who asked the question knew the Criterion of Truth. That "Criterion" *is* the Quran, and God is the One Who said it. Frithjof Schuon and my sister-wives, plus many people around the world, still today, want to follow a wrong Criterion.

There *is* a Religio Perennis, but not *above the word of God*. No true sublime, inner, secret, esoteric doctrine exists, except as the innermost aspect of

the Word of God. But somewhere in his youth or childhood, Frithjof Schuon, went wrong: He began to worship himself, and thought others should do that too!

So what about us wives and some of his closest disciples: Where, why, how did we go wrong? Look, I'm not sure, but part of it was due to ignorance about the religion we had been converted to. When an Occidental becomes a Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu, he (usually, not always) has no idea what he's getting into. We love freedom from discipline these days, and our education identifies freedom with lack of discipline! One of the "you's" for whom I'm writing this book, is those of you, who are like I was—a convert to a relatively unknown religion.

There's another thing I noticed with us wives: Three of them tried to practise humility in a false way—by submitting to everything. And our husband really liked that kind of woman!

The fourth, my dear little cabbage, was different in a way. She had to submit too, to the utmost; but she had an ideal of love. She wanted love, and she was *fantastically gifted for love*: Not sexuality at all: *love!* If she hadn't been so possessive, and a bit out of her mind sometimes, she could have been the ideal wife for someone.

I'm afraid some loves are mixed with love of power or prestige too; but all this is up to the Lord. I'm just warning you. If I saw some or all of them again, purified and forgiven, I'd be delighted. However, after triple hugs with everyone, I'd rather be the third wife of someone else!

For decades, my ideal was to be in a paradise of nature, with a waterfall for a shower, with birds flying through my house, animals I've loved, and a lion lying down with a lamb. I wanted some foal of Pegasus too—the flying white horse, to take me to all the Paradises, Prophets, saints and good people who had ever lived. If you, and/or I (hopefully both) go the Next World, God willing, we will have what we love most. What I love most is traveling: I'm dying to visit everyone, everywhere; and I want to meet you too.

Flying high like Icarus

In an ancient Greek myth, the genial Daedalus, helps his son escape from an impossible situation. How? By gathering feathers and creating powerful wings, which he bound to his son, Icarus, with wax.

Before sending Icarus into the air, Daedalus gives him only one piece of advice: Do not fly near the sun. But as soon as Icarus leaves, the joy of flying goes to his head. He forgets the words of his father—flying ever higher until the heat of the sun melts the wax that holds his wings. The wings fall off, and Icarus falls to his doom in the sea below. To this day, that is called "The Sea of Icarus."

All myths are symbolic and often have many meanings; but I'm going to invent some interpretations to help you understand something I can't quite say without pictures. Well, the Sun is a symbol of God: No one can dream that he can get close to God's perfection. Next: A father is like a a Prophet or a spiritual master. One must obey him or fall. The Shaykh al-Alawi and Shaykh Abdul Wahid Yahya (René Guénon) were two living masters who Frithjof Schuon knew; but rather than follow and obey either of them, he flew higher—considering himself their superiors.

To top it all off, he thought he was higher than *all* the greatest masters of the past, except once in a while when they said something he could use. He was a stealer—taking wives, words, ideas, and the highest, universal esoterism. He used them, put his name on them, took credit, and flew high. Not one of the great masters agreed with him.[70] Once, I mentioned several of the greatest spiritual masters: "I'm not interested in those men!" he said.

In case someone still doesn't believe that Frithjof Schuon placed metaphysics and the Religio Perennis too high in relation to revelation, then consider this: Once he told another wife and myself that he would open the paradise of the Religio Perennis, and that paradise would be *above* the paradises of the individual religions. In other words the Religio Perennis would be higher than revelation. This statement made to two wives at home in private, was, so far as I know, never written in a book; but it's extremely revealing. It shows how much he thought of himself, that *he* (Not God, nor the Prophet) was going to open a new paradise—a paradise which isn't mentioned anywhere in any revelation! That paradise would be so high, that it would be above the revelations in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, in the Quran and in any previous religion. This paradise that he would open would be higher and better than the paradises whose Prophets were appointed as Prophets by God Himself!

He got out of Godwariness, wiggled out of it, by calling Islam just a form. He wanted to be above the *form* of Islam and be in the essence of all religions. What he created is no school; it's a "movement," and a so-called paradise for that is nothing, absolutely nowhere—nonsense, because God didn't create it. It was only the dream of a megalomaniac, who wanted to own the highest truth. Sometimes, people play around with capital letters: That's part of "stealing" the Truth: Put a capital letter on something and then say you represent it. Perennialism with*out* a capital p has existed for all time, and it has been known everywhere on earth. In Islam, the idea goes back to three verses in the Quran: سُنَّةَ اللهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللهِ تَبْدِيلا "That was the law (or behavior, Sunnah) of Allah in the case of those who lived before and there will never be any change in the law of Allah." (Quran, 33:62).

70 See Appendix VIII: Quotations from the Masters of Tasawwuf.

And: سُنَّةَ مَنۡ قَدۡ اَرۡسَلۡنَا قَبۡلَكَ مِنۡ رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحۡوِيۡلًا "(Such was Our behavior) Sunnah in the case of those whom We sent before you (to mankind), and you will never find change in Our Sunnah. (Quran, 17:77).

And above all: وَلَا يَحۡزُنۡكَ قَوۡلُهُمۡ اِنَّ الۡعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا ؕ هُوَ السَّمِيۡعُ الۡعَلِيۡمُ "No change can there be in the Words of Allah this is indeed the supreme success." (Quran, 10:64).

Every religion (the way it was revealed, without any changes made by man) is submission to God. So, Christianity in its essence and in its beginning, is the same as Islam. So is Judaism, so is Buddhism, so is Hinduism. I'm not sure about a few others, but I think several more are true (والله أعلم God knows best). I realize that some of those religions are hard for many to accept, and for diverse reasons; but if you know enough to have questions, you are capable of reading many books in the Bibliography. After that, you'll understand.

Chapter 22
Without the Basmalah

"Every matter that does not begin with 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,' is falsehood..."

Abu Hurayrah

When I had been out of the Tariqah for several years—having last seen the Shaykh at my new house, which I'd had to sell long before, I received a letter from the Shaykh! While opening it, I was full of hope *again* (I'm impossible, but mostly on this subject of a guide. In other ways, I'm no worse than most). But the first thing I saw was that it had no Basmalah on top! The Basmalah is what all Muslims write at the head of a letter, unless they are writing a short note. It means "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful." No Shaykh would write a letter without beginning with that... this Shaykh, I knew. For a brief note, he might use another blessed phrase. (Another time, Sayyidah Badriyyah wrote to me saying "In the Name of God;" but without those Names of Mercy: These omissions leave an ominous impression upon anyone who knows Arabic and Islam—especially when relations are strained).

Well, there was nothing on top and it didn't have my name on it either. I'd noticed that the fuqara had stopped calling me by my Muslim name, "Aminah," long before that too: I was Maude Murray to them. Actually both are fine names: Aminah means trustworthy or faithful, and it's an epithet of Muhammad's; Maude Murray means Madeleine of Mary. Anyway, taking my name away was symptomatic: It meant I'd ceased to exist as a spiritual being in their society; and I knew he had ordered my namelessness, because absolutely everything worked at his command. Well, then the letter listed my faults of the last few years, claiming I had said "I want a sweet little husband," and that I

was doing "psychological counseling," among other things. Those accusations were signed "Frithjof Schuon."

Everything in it was false. I had never said I wanted a sweet little husband. It was a combination of two or three sentences that somebody had put together. The psychological counseling was true in way: I'd had no way to earn a living and could hardly stand up, but was fine otherwise, and I thrive on taking care of people. I had used a method much like Alcoholics Anonymous, using trust in God. This was the only method of counseling that the Shaykh approved of. One of his closest disciples had been quite an alcoholic and his whole family had to go on a retreat. They had followed this method, coming back telling us all about it. So the Shaykh quite approved of that. But no one had asked me what this was about. They didn't hear two sides of the story.

When I saw that letter I thought the devil was somewhere. I was afraid that he was in me, or that I wasn't forgiven; but then I thought about it a little bit: That was a diabolic letter, full of falsehood and with no grace, no blessing in it at all. I was horrified to realize that this was the result of my dear little cabbage's being the only intermediary after I'd left. No one could talk to him but her, so whatever she told him, he believed, right up until he died, still adoring her.

Sidi Abdul Ali too: I heard that he was a staunch "Brussels sprout" of hers, after he stopped talking to me. I would never have blamed anyone for loving her; I'd adored her. But she needed to be corrected and controlled. It's normal for women to be jealous; almost every woman would rather have her husband to herself, but she went really far. Every word that she heard about me was used to eliminate me. She really didn't need to get rid of anyone; she was so far his favorite, that I didn't even think I was married to him anymore. After I left, Latifeli told me that Badriyyeli had tried to eliminate her too.

After she came, I was such a zero; oh my goodness! The three of us had planned that when *he* died, she and I would build a house together on a certain ridge. We would live together until the ends of *our* lives. But one day she came to me and told me he had said that he didn't want anyone to live with her after he died. I understood that she was so special to him that he didn't want anyone else to be associated with her greatness; but it reduced me to such a zero! That was astonishing, after he had loved and needed me so much. When I was new, he had spoken so negatively of the first two wives, that I was surprised. Then ages later, I heard how he used to adore and make love to the first wife of Sidi Abdul Quddus—later calling her "an historic friend!" He had the heart of an artichoke—giving a leaf to each one. Then he threw all the leaves away! In contrast, I always try to *add* people to my life—never to *delete* one when I take another. As for those who left me: I want them back!

Dead and buried

"Stop the world: I want to get off!"
(From a song by The Arctic Monkeys)

One day when I was alone with my cat, as usual, and I'd already received that letter, full of false accusations, I thought I'd call Sayyidah Latifah and try to explain what was false. No one would see me; but I still had their phone numbers. Latifeli usually tried to keep up some kind of relationships longer than others. Maybe she could tell the Shaykh that the letter was wrong, because he was refusing to see me on false grounds, believing things about me which weren't true. No matter how many things happened, I wasn't giving up on "an unsurpassable spiritual master."

So I called her up and corrected everything. As ever, she understood and told me she was going through the same things with Badriyyeli; but she didn't do anything to keep me from losing my spiritual master, and she didn't seem to realize how grave my situation was. I didn't care at all about losing him as a husband; I was fed up with the whole situation and wanted out, but as a spiritual master, not at all. I would only believe God, Himself, if *He* told me I had a false master.

Not to leave any stone unturned before starting a new life away from all of them, I got a bright idea! I asked Latifeli to have Badriyyeli call me to tell me "why I had fallen." *Maybe* I'd learn a real fault, and I could tell *her* what was wrong in that letter. *She* could correct it with the Shaykh, who had thrown me out of the Tariqah on false grounds, and then she could explain to the community. That request was of a type no one can refuse!

Soon, that cabbage called. I was sweet as pie to start with—ever relenting and ready to love her again. She said that I had fallen because my "family" (father, and she didn't say who else) was degenerate, and I had taken my function (as a counselor, at the center of the Tariqah) too seriously! I said that my family was "as normal as apple pie;" but she answered "Oh," or some such. As for my function, I had told the moon that I was resigning, long before, if she continued trying get rid of me. Remember "the night of the moon," when I said interiorly, "Oh moon, thou art my witness…" But I didn't tell her that. If she accuses me after we are both dead: Maybe I can call upon the moon! In Islam, people must settle their differences among themselves before the Day of Judgement.

Then she told me how much the Shaykh liked her mother, who was invited to tea. Now the Shaykh had told her that her mother was of a pretty high caste, the princely caste—just what he had told me about my father! A strange and obvious replacement that made my head spin. I hadn't seen her for years, and wouldn't ever see her again; but once I passed her on a road: She had a new car—The color of one I had had. He had found that the perfectly "normative"

(that was a word he used for his taste, his Sunnah) color for a metallic thing. All in all, her replacing me was so primitive and obvious! So guess what? I could hardly believe it!

I asked her to please correct the things in that dreadful letter which threw me out of the Tariqah in so many words. She understood; but said, "No one talks about that story anymore!" So my false and forgiven sins and faults were recorded; but my case was closed: There was no way for me to correct years of false impressions, no way to tell the Shaykh that I still wanted to be his disciple and friend—just not a wife. I was dead and buried. There was no name on my tombstone!

PROOF

Chapter 23
What Allah Said

"And say: Truth hath come and falsehood hath vanished away. Lo! falsehood is ever bound to vanish."

Quran 17:81

If you do not believe that Islam is a true religion, hear about the *God of Islam!* He is your God too; but in this part of my story, He is called by His Arabic Name, "Allah." Normally, for you all, I write "God" so you won't feel too much like a stranger; but now you're reading about the God of Islam, and you're also reading about me. You know that, like many modern-day people, I had mountains of sins by this time: I was no saint, nor anywhere near being one!

When I was out the Tariqah and totally alone with my Lord, I spoke to Him more fervently than ever before. I didn't know how to perform Istikharah except for the opening of the Quran with one's eyes closed. That was Istikharah for all of the Turuq Shadhili, or so I thought then, because I learned it from *my* Shaykh, who said he had learned it from *his* Shaykh, the great Shaykh al-Alawi of Algeria.

I still don't know the whole truth about this; but *please don't do it,* with the Quran or the Bible, because the practice is fraught with dangers; and so are *all* signs and graces. That is a great danger for spiritual people: *All* great spiritual masters say it. I was in an exceptional situation, being both ignorant and isolated.

Well, there I was, alone with our Lord. But I was afraid to open the Quran with my eyes shut, putting a finger down on a page, because of possible illusion. I'll explain why. God, His angels, all creation, and forces of I know

not what… all those forces, *which include the Quran itself*, are there to help us to do (and be) what we *will* to be and do. If you want to be king, or have an illegitimate thing, you might open the Quran, and it could say "king" or "permission" or some such thing. Now Frithjof Schuon taught me that; I'm not sure it's doctrine; but once I went astray due to that; and wept for ten years afterwards. Did you get the idea? Don't do it!

Once the Shaykh had opened the Quran to ask if he could allow an affair that was absolutely forbidden many times over in the Quran; but a piece of blank, white paper fell out while he was opening the Book. He concluded that he had carte blanche to do whatever He *willed* to allow—contrary to the will of God, which was clear in those pages. So, he allowed an affair, that nearly destroyed his Tariqah and did much to ruin the life of a child who found out about it. (He let his first wife have, for all practical purposes, an affair with the man next door, while he himself was making love to that neighbor's wife, upstairs).

Another time, an old man became extremely ill; his family hesitated to put him in the hospital—not knowing if modern medicine would be worse for him or not (we all tried to go to homeopaths or some such, but we made reasonable exceptions). Well, his family opened the Quran. It said: "Deliver them not into the hands of the disbelievers;" but they had no faith in that! If you do ask the Quran in this way, you believe it. The verses that require Muslims to judge by the Quran and the Sunnah apply to this practice too; and the Quran (which is word for word revelation) says that unless Muslims judge by it, they are astray and living in evil.

The people in the family of the sick man, then went to psychic healers (and one was honest, pious and really gifted too). Those healers all said he was gone; there was no way to save him. I forget the details; but they went to one, then drove far away to another, to see if they agreed: they did; but the family really wanted to try the hospital. A man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still. Or better, as Frithjof Schuon rightly told me, "The need for explanations increases in direct proportion to the *will, not* to understand!"

My dear legal husband, told them to use reason—"forget the Quran," he said. (He was an erudite scholar and something of a genius, but he lacked faith)! I said: "Open the Quran in a life or death situation, and you must believe it." But oh my! The doctor in the hospital had a Muslim name; so they asked him if he was a believer. He said, "Of course," so they took their venerable old father to the hospital. There the surgeon had to cut him open: His gall bladder had burst, and bile was all through his blood. Then he was put on continuous dialysis to wash his blood. Then he was put in an oxygen tank, and his heart was kept beating with some machine… I forget what kind. Months later, he died in misery, away from home, dehumanized and after much suffering.

So why did it all go wrong? Because they lacked faith when they opened the Quran. Yes, the surgeon *was* a believer, but he *represented* modern medicine, which is based upon disbelief—lack of faith in the Next World. Now Frithjof Schuon was in Morocco at the time this family had the problem, and it was the first spiritual mystery I faced by myself, with no help from my dear legal husband and companion. I told that family, tactfully, but in front of my husband (I had no choice) that my husband was wrong. The truth has rights second to none. The family followed my husband anyway. At least I'd done my duty; but I was nervous!

When the Shaykh came back, I was delighted. He said I'd been right. You see: He *was* a spiritual genius, even as concerns faith: It was not just as a metaphysician that he was genial. He was pious, loving (at least for women, and until they started to get old) and he had too many qualities, sins, and faults to describe short of writing an encyclopaedia!

Now that you all see why I was afraid to open the Quran, let's go back to the day I started to tell you about. There I was: talking, begging for Allah's help; and my soul was as if bombed, with pieces on Saturn, Pluto. I was vaguely aware that subtle forces could be around me: My Shaykh was quite a phenomenon, so the devil, spirits, and I knew not what could get into me.

Suddenly I had an idea, and I suggested this to our Lord: I said, "Allahumma (Oh God), I *will* open the Book; but I'm not asking Thee for the answer to a question. I'll only ask if Thou wilt agree to guide me through the Quran afterwards. If Thou accepteth only this, give me a sign. Let the sign be that I will find the passage where Jacob says: فصبر جميل والله المستعان (*Comely patience is my recourse; and it is Allah, whose help is sought*)."

I had already had an extremely strong intuition that I was going to enter such a long and dreadful trial that I could not survive it except with patience; and those words have been favorites of mine since I became a Muslim. The brothers of Joseph had killed a goat, and put its blood on Joseph's multicolored shirt. Then they showed their father Jacob that shirt, and informed him that Joseph had been eaten by a wild beast. Jacob then says this فصبر جميل والله المستعان (*Comely patience is my recourse; and it is Allah, whose help is sought*).

I opened the Quran; it said, "Comely patience is my recourse; and it is Allah, whose help is sought!" My heart melted due to love and gratitude: *He* had looked "down" to answer me! *His* Mercy endures forever. That is known; but having Him look down to answer my question made me faint away with love and gratitude.

In a way, God only speaks to Prophets; but the words one finds in this practice, which is called "F'il ul-Quran," were already revealed. Those words are alive, just as Jesus Christ is alive. The Holy Spirit is alive. In Islam, the revelation is a Book; In Christianity, a man was the Logos, or revelation. The Quran calls Jesus the Word and the Spirit of God.

So when I knew He would teach me through opening the Quran, I dared ask Him about the state of the Tariqah. The answer was: ان موعدهم الصبح اليس الصبح بقريب (*Truly their tryst is for the morning; is not the morning nigh?*) I could certainly not believe that! It's what is said about Lot's people, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gemorra—that they would be destroyed in the morning! I struggled with our Lord: This is not possible! *Please* give me confirmation. I opened the Quran again; but I received the same passage! I argued, begged, pleaded, and opened the Quran seven to ten times: I *always* got that *same* verse! My people were going to be destroyed like the people of Lot!

I am *so* hard-headed and stubborn that I still did not *want* to believe it. So I figured there must be a problem with my Quran, making it always open on the same page. I did a "scientific" test, changing chairs and opening the Quran without asking questions. No, my Quran was fine; but I was shocked. Scared to death for my former family, my beloved sister-wives, and my friends, I was about to start another new life.

However, first I read the Quran as much as I could—extremely inspired. I had already read it ten times, but to no avail. It is quite hard to understand without a commentary, as it isn't like other books at all. Anyway, I read a lot more and marked passages that showed how wrong we all were. And oh dear! I learned how grave were the faults I'd been observing! Especially lying. I had a "vision"—I mean a premonition of truth from what I was reading, that Sidi Xyz was in trouble. He lied whenever the Shaykh told him to—even calling my father and telling *him* that my marriage with the Shaykh hadn't been a real marriage, and that I had lied to my father!

I decided to warn him, by telling him some verses about lying. One was: "...Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie!" Later I read a hadith too: It says that liars cannot go to Paradise. That's the most desolate news possible; so I was right: He had to repent and make himself over again right away, because he was an inveterate liar, who had orchestrated all our lying in court; so I phoned and asked to see him. Although I'd considered him a close friend and helper; now I was on the other side of a fence, and needed an appointment. He was the one who had built an adorable house for me when the Shaykh obviously wanted me near him. That house was so dear, that when I first saw it, I thought it had been made out of something in my own heart! Well, his wife (also a former best friend) said he was away (which I didn't quite believe); but she said her sister and brother-in-law[71] would see me instead.

What could I do? I accepted, but had no idea what I was doing when I got there, because they were both looking so insolent! She wasn't looking at me, but into the woods; whereas he had the hypocritical look of a businessman on

71 He was Patrick Casey, now a Khalifah, or the only Khalifah: I don't know which; but may I be saved from him; and may he change and be forgiven, so I won't ever think about him like that again!

his face—a smirk. At the end, desperate, I told them I'd open the Quran and see what Almighty God had to say about our differences. Really, I didn't know what to do or think unless He told me. In front of them, I opened it with my eyes closed, and then looked where my finger was. The passage was: "Can you not see that they are going astray in every valley?" Inside myself, I said, "Allahumma (Literally "Oh Allah;" but actually that is endlessly profound in Arabic), I *see* it perfectly well; but I *cannot believe* it!" They wanted to know what it said, and were sure the passage proved that they were right and I was wrong. I refused to tell them what it said, and left muttering some symbolic incident that struck me, from the Quran. Really, I had no idea what I was doing those days. Everything was so devastatingly tragic *in a way*, that I was only at home, alone with Allah, in the most real way. I'd always been like that; but you must notice too: If one is devoted to God, He seems very near when you're in trouble. I felt as if He were hovering right near me, all the time—so closely that I knew Him to be my only Protecting Friend.

As for my not believing what I was seeing, there was "reason in my madness," as Shakespeare said. For years, I'd seen so much beauty, intelligence and goodness in each person, especially in the Shaykh, who could talk like a door to God. I had been living in a heaven on earth, even during the first five years in Bloomington, when Badriyyeli was the best friend I'd ever had in my life! Then all hell broke loose!

The good actually *had* been there, but on the outside. There's an orally transmitted hadith that I heard much later from a true Shaykh: Some companions of the Prophet were standing around a palm tree, while one of them was climbing it. His legs were so thin and odd looking, that they began to laugh. Muhammad upbraided them, saying that the inner worth of that man was as great as the mountain in the distance.

Every single thing in the Tariqah had been exquisitely beautiful, with a truly aristocratic sense of moderation and naturalness too. It was as if the Shaykh and Sayyidah Latifah had stolen, or appropriated traditional beauty (without the Truth and discipline behind it) from all the most soberly beautiful cultures of the world. That beauty, with charisma, the physical beauty of people and endless modalities... all that was as if "stolen," or "appropriated," to hide a lack of beauty in souls. The lack of inner beauty only showed after decades, or in crises, and I am absolutely delighted that I got a plain view of it! If I hadn't, goodness knows where I'd have ended up.

Suddenly, I was in a completely different position with all those people I had so much loved and admired: I was now on the wrong side, a critic of Sayyidah Badriyyah's. That meant that I was an enemy of the Shaykh's too, and of everyone in the society. I had not wanted that position at all. Through thick and thin, I'd gone on loving them all; but whenever I tried to believe that they were good, they'd prove me wrong.

I'd been absolutely certain that the Shaykh was "an unsurpassable spiritual master," and I wasn't going to leave him anymore than Milarepa would have left his guide, Marpa. But to be a true Guide, one must be a *good human being too*. I knew that by instinct, so I kept trying to see him, talk to him, appear outside his house so he would remember me, show that he was human, and talk. But he only called the police—believing his new wife, without ever hearing my side.

They were all thinking that I was against the Shaykh and Sayyidah Badriyyah. I had not been, in spite of tremendous trials; but they had forced me to realize that something was very wrong with them every time I tried to love them again. It would still take me ages to assimilate *what* was wrong. Then, oh my! I saw everything at once! You'll see me alone with Allah again, fifteen years later, in the chapter, called "Allahumma, is this the End?"

Now that was really God talking; and many people have had graces like mine—albeit I've never heard of anything so definitive and repeated like that. Receiving a grace does *not* mean one is great; it *does* mean that God will "look down" in mercy, to help us or send help by angels or by some other means, in life or death situations. *Spiritual* life or death, *even* including knowledge, can be a life or death kind of emergency for someone on a spiritual path. *There is a sunnah way of doing Istikharah*: *look it up or ask any educated Muslim*. I had never (or barely) heard of that. What I did is called Fi'l ul-Quran and it is allowed in exceptional circumstances, but only after one has performed Istikharah many times. It seems obvious that our Lord had mercy on me, because I was totally isolated, knew of nothing else, and thought this was the only kind of Istikharah.

Above, under this heading, as in a future one, you are seeing what God Himself said—the same God we all have; but in this case, the God who speaks in the Quran. The followers of Frithjof Schuon, who are still following him, and who dismiss *my* warnings, say that there are "forces of darkness" against "the Shaykh." No; there are forces from God, which are warning you and me. Many people are being blinded by sublime ideas; but they are also resorting to sophistry.

After that, I forgot what happened that day, for some 15 years, until I was on top of a mountain, literally on the opposite side of the world. Then I remembered: Our Lord had promised to teach me through the Quran! I had never understood *why* my people would be destroyed, and I still had a little hope that they would all repent and we'd be one happy family again. Dear diary, your friend is practically incurable!

Chapter 24
Any Old Port in a Storm

"...They have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the careless."

Quran 7:179

The handful of jelly beans

Soon, providentially, I'd get out of the kind of work, which required living in other people's houses, cleaning, cooking and taking care of children. I hadn't minded the work, and had loved being with children; but few of my employers were likeable. The trouble was that I then got into an infinitely better situation, in which I learn, thrive, and really love some people; but there would also be a tragic side to my new situation, at The Islamic Society of North America, where I would live and work for three years.

In my last live-in nanny job, the people were stingy, as I saw straight away. After I'd been there a week, they told me they were missing a lot of milk since I'd come. In this kind of job, one lives in, drives the family car, eats the family's food and has almost no expenses; but one isn't paid much—all of which had to be fine by me. I had no choice. Long gone were the days of being well-qualified for a job: Those days ended when I left Switzerland to retire, for the sake of the Shaykh.

Well, one day I ate some jelly beans and mentioned that to the lady of the house. She wanted me to pay for them and said, "Jelly beans are on sale in such and such a store." I lost my temper; not standing it that she was going to make

me buy back a handful of jelly beans. So I threw the receipt in her face and said, "I quit." The man of the house drove me to my father's little apartment, on the spot: They were tired of me, and I had had quite enough of their penny-pinching attitude; but how would I survive? I had a few hundred dollars, and my father lived on his small Social Security pension. I'd never use anything of his; but he couldn't drive anymore but had a car, so he gave me his sturdy little, bright orange car.

I spent the night, sleeping on the floor, in my father's apartment, and then drove my "new" old car to The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), where I'd already visited a few times. In the basement, an erudite mother had been teaching little boys to read the Quran, so I had joined in—barely knowing what was what. Actually, she was the wife of the Secretary-General, Sayyid Muhammad Syeed. There were so few children to teach there, that she only had half a dozen little boys, several of whom were her own. She was, however, a fine teacher, who could have taught crowds of well-educated adults. That Muslim woman was a force of nature: I mean like thunder or waterfalls, strong!

Well, the day after I ate those jelly beans, I didn't go to that basement again. I wended my way upstairs, where there was a big vestibule—actually, a whole floor with some sofas in the middle. There were little offices all around that open place, with windows that looked into it. I sat down on one of the sofas and started praying, wondering what to do next. Maybe I could find a room to rent and get a job as a cashier in a gas station or something. I didn't realize it yet; but I'm so incompetent with numbers and money that I could never have kept a job as a cashier. I had no idea how to run a cash register either, and I could only type in Arabic, Persian... well, you know.

Years later I found out that one of the secretaries, named Habibe, had seen me praying there, through her office window. She said to the cleaning lady, named Khadijah: "Let's try and help this lady"; so the cleaning lady came over to me. She was a big round, rollie-pollie looking American woman, white as snow, all wrapped up in a tight hijab, like all the women there—very properly dressed; but I was in American clothes. She came over to me and she was so folksy, friendly and sweet, that I loved her right away—and immediately felt at home.

Both those future friends of mine were brave American women converted to Islam. They were called *Sister* Habibe, and *Sister* Khadijah. There were no more Sidis and Sayyidahs in that place. In Islam, as in reality, we are all related—being the descendants of Adam. Races don't matter. I knew that; but saying "brother" and "sister" would take some getting used to. In general, I was meeting plain Islam head on: All notions of aristocracy and spiritual superiority were gone. Life is so confusing though: There actually was some superiority in the Tariqah; but it was nullified due to an insolent disdain for what God said.

Well, Sister Khadijah asked me who I was and what I was doing there; so I told her I was trying to find a room to rent. She waved to the maintenance man, who happened to be walking by: "Don't you have a room in your house to rent?" she asked. The next thing I knew, I was in a dilapidated old truck, on the way to his house. He looked no better than his truck; but got me there, where I was shown a room. It looked like him and his truck; but the rest of the house and the neighborhood were nice. The walls in that room were dirty and there were huge posters of racing cars, placed crookedly all around—just my style! His wife however, was a dear, and she gave me a delicious bowl of spiced lentils! Her name was Sister Bibi, and they were half-brown-looking people from British New Guinea.

I did rent that room for next to nothing and went right out to buy paint. Then I pulled everything off the walls, cleaned out the room, painted it, patched up everything, and had a beautiful hermitage before suppertime.

The maintenance man, named Brother Ohab, said, "Wow, you know how to paint!"

"I've been painting since I was seven years old. My parents were always painting and repairing houses," I said.

"Well, there's a job for a painter at the Islamic Society. A man no one likes made an offer to paint each room for so and so much, and he will charge $50 extra, per room, to take the furniture out. I'll take you there and you give your estimate."

So he drove me back and showed me the rooms and the estimate they'd been given. He was on my side, and we both knew that the organization was being taken for a ride. Somebody was cheating them. And charging $50 to take the furniture out of each room was outrageous. All one had to do was push the furniture into the middle of the room and put a piece of plastic over it. So I told them I'd do the job for half of what the other man offered, and I'd do it right. "You want a painter? I'm your man!"

They actually hired me! And I did a good job, painting several offices for the fundraising department. It seemed they had almost never seen any good work around that place—being used to, God forgive me, incompetent people born in Muslim countries, who were pious, but extremely careless. Born Muslims, and born everythings can have an amazingly passive kind of degeneration. Degenerate Occidentals are usually overly ambitious, exaggerating with hyper-activity. This was the first time I'd meet passive degeneration, and it made my heart bleed!

Praise the Lord, I learned all about the people and the place right away, thanks to a man who rented *another* room in Ohab's house—a young man who worked at the Islamic Society, named Altaf, who was from India. I would come to love the Indo-Pakistani spirit; but it began with knowing him. Altaf personified that spirit, and was brilliant too. The first film on Gandhi helped;

but don't ask me about the politics in that film; and don't ask about Mahatma Gandhi either. I loved the movie so much that I read a stack of books about Gandhi, India and the British at the time. But talk about a confusing person: Read a lot about Gandhi! After the Muslim's month of fasting, he had the Hindus and the Muslims so full of goodwill, that a million men, Muslims with their Hindu neighbors, were dancing in the streets, with their arms around one another's shoulders. As for his ego and character, Gandhi sounded like an amateur Schuon.

Well, Altaf and I got along like a couple of thieves. Since he had no car and was dependent upon the undependable Ohab, I drove him to work every day (Well, after seeing how I drove, he took over) and we talked a mile a minute all the way. Moreover, Altaf worked in the fundraising department, where I had my foot in the door as a painter. I'd have gone on painting there forever, as I was learning about a more normal Islam, and I had three new, Muslim women-friends—all so much more reasonable than my three, brilliant and talented sister-wives! I hadn't had any means for comparison, and was judging my sister-wives by their gifts.

On the one hand I found my new ambience more normal, and above all more *Islamic*: I would learn a lot. On the other hand, not one person there, even those I would come to love, had any idea that they were drowning in the false ideas of the modern world. No one was as intelligent as the fuqara either: Some were brilliant or sharp as a tack; but not one was profound. In short, what I wanted was neither *here* at The Islamic Society of North America, nor *there* in the Tariqah. I didn't know who he was yet; but in a minimal, pale way, I was passing, like Salman the Persian, from one error to another.

Altaf knew everything I didn't, and he taught me about every movement and reform in Islam, the politics and economics of each Muslim country, and everything about Islamic organizations. So guess what I know today? Nothing! I don't remember a word he taught me, except about people's characters—those at "ISNA," and some modern reformers.

Altaf and I had a common boss: Well, all the men were bosses in layers; then came us womenfolk. Three of us were glorified secretaries, called "Administrative Assistants," and Khadijah was the cleaning lady. In my opinion, us women were all more intelligent and capable than nearly all the men; but each one there had a strong and a weak point. However, one, Dr. Syeed, was as complicated as the Gordian Knot—*so* good, and *so* bad too. He would be one of the most confusing people in my life.

Altaf and I always had dinner with the family we lived with: Ohab, Bibi and their several grown and handsome sons, all of whom were truck drivers and rather rough; but the family was both homey and folksy. I got along fine with them, and that Altaf was so funny, he always had us in stitches. Once I told him I wanted a secondhand air conditioner for my room. Making fun of

me and sounding aggressive, he said: "What do you want an air conditioner for? That's waste. Buy hair conditioner and take off the 'h'!"

He was always teasing Ohab, the father of the house, and it was a houseful of crazies. They were always around that dinner table, and couldn't say a sentence without the word "jackass" in it. Their language was not the best; but I'm a flexible type: I can put up with about anything. They weren't quite obscene.

One day another man, who rented a room upstairs, came home, and told us all: He had a car accident. His car was wrecked, but he got it fixed and this and that. He talked a long time and never used the word jackass, so I thought: "Something is different tonight." He kept on and they asked him questions. It turned out that his car was fixed, *but* his license had been taken away, so he couldn't drive it. After this long monologue, he said: "I'm fine; everything else is too, my car's okay. Now, all I need is some jackass to drive it for me." I laughed and knew something had been missing that night. A jackass had to turn up somewhere!

So I had three bosses: Brother Altaf, Brother Ahmad higher up, and Dr. Syeed on top of everyone. Altaf was fantastic; our common boss was fantastically incompetent, and Dr. Syeed was fantastically confusing! He could be good, kind and human—always embracing his enemies who came to visit. And one could put a microphone in front of him, anywhere, anytime, and he would instantly become the smoothest diplomat, making peace. As a Manager, he was, I'd say almost—not quite—criminally negligent. And his dream was to have Muslim immigrants look like upper class Americans: He *sounded* like a pious Muslim; but when push came to shove, he did and said the strangest things—having swallowed the errors of modernism hook, line and sinker. He was so good to me *and* so negligent... that, well: He was a case!

I had come with a whole van full of furniture, which had been at the house where I'd eaten the jellybeans; but it wouldn't fit in my room at Ohab's, so Dr. Syeed (who was from Indian Kashmir) let me put all my worldly possessions behind a screen. I was astonished that he was so human as to let me do such a thing; but I saw from the faces of the staff that *they* did not approve at all. Apparently, he was always doing things that were a bit odd, and taking care of me was one of them. As for me, but not for myself personally, I was exceedingly grateful to see such a human side left in anyone. Later, he also offered to let my Christian father live on ISNA's property: Dr. Syeed had the usual Muslim virtue of love for the elderly. I refused the offer; but loved his daring spirit and sympathy.

For the first time in my life, except when praying, I had to dress as a Muslim woman, and my adherence to orthodox Islam improved in every way. The Secretary-General (Dr. Syeed) would give sermons on a different subject each week; and I was always learning from the way people acted too. They followed the Sunnah, the Prophetic *norm* (at least in some things) and I'd barely heard

of that! I also learned from the way my colleagues acted. As the Prophet had done, the Secretary-General always left his door open. Any of us, or any child, could walk into his office at any time: He was in charge, but accessible. There were children all over the place: They were a nuisance; but many people, like my immediate boss, Altaf, approved of it. He said when he got married he wanted to have five children playing around his desk.

After I was hired, there was a period during which no one knew what to do with me, because I didn't even know how to turn on a computer, but was especially competent and knowledgeable. One nice man taught me just one thing: How to change 6,000 addresses online, which hadn't been changed in years. He, himself, was so good with computers that he told me he could build one in minutes if someone put him in a dark room with the parts; and he wasn't bragging; he could do that. Now he has an important job. Well, he taught me how to do it, and I spent weeks on it. When I got through he asked me: "Did you tap 'send' after you did each one?" I answered: "No, why?" It turned out that all the time that I had spent correcting those addresses was completely worthless, because I hadn't understood that I had to tap one more button after each change! That man, named Ashfaq, was so kind and patient that he didn't think any more of it. I don't think he even told the others about it. And me? I've been admiring his forbearance ever since. I loved him: He's the brother of my brother, the only person who has ever adopted *me!* All my other relatives passed *my* tests. That brother chose me, so he has to put up with what he got!

Once there was a Peace Gathering at ISNA: People from all religions were coming, so imagine! I was ecstatic! There was a Jewish Rabbi, Catholic Priests, Quaker women—no Hindus or Buddhists; but exoteric Muslims have no idea how to situate them. I wanted to get to know all those people, make peace and bring about more inter-religious understanding through knowledge. But after trying to be friendly with the Rabbi and a few others, I was lost! Next thing I knew, we were all seated around a very long table, and I had two nice Quaker women—one on each side. Wanting to know more about why they were Quakers, and to tell them why Islam was irresistible, I was chattering away. Somehow, it came out that they hadn't really come to talk about being Quakers, and they quite politely said they didn't want to hear about Islam either. Astonished, I asked, "Why do all you people from different religions (or denominations) meet here every year?" One of them said, "We want peace in the world." My head was spinning, wondering how they were going to go about that; but after polite conversations during lunch, everyone went home.

Another time, many Catholic priests came, and one of them delivered a really long, but excellent speech summing up Catholic doctrine. I quite admired the speech, and since ISNA's other staff members were much like clams, I congratulated that Priest, and told them all how the Quran compared to Jesus in Islam: The Word of God (the Quran) is a living Book, relevant forever, whereas

Muhammad, who was illiterate and yet received the Quran, was like Mary, who gave birth to Jesus although she was a Virgin. My words had zero effect upon the Catholics—not that I'd expected much—and the meeting broke up. Afterwards I asked Dr. Syeed about what I'd said, as I'm often not sure of myself. His answer was, in so many words, that I was wrong. I've grown up now: No, I think *he* was wrong, and there *are* a few ways to explain even exoteric differences.

One weekend, Sister Heather and I snuck into Brother Ashfaq's windowless room, and mounted an enormous piece of wallpaper on the entire wall behind his desk. We had bought that specially: On it was a bright blue sky, pure white couds, and a stunning scene in nature—all looking quite real. On Monday morning, he was bowled over with surprise and delight! Ashfaq had some spirit, and was quite a good sport.

Years after working there, I went back to visit. My influence was gone from the whole place: It seemed inhuman and much less Islamic. The large inscriptions I'd had framed, were gone, and there were charts of progress on the walls. Brother Ashfaq was still there, in that same windowless office; but bureaucracy and standardization had crept in. No more originality was allowed, and his wall was back to being a stark white. While I was standing there, feeling disappointed and sad, Brother Ashfaq said, "Look up!" There was an enormous light fixture up there, and he'd put a big piece of wallpaper with sky and clouds inside it. When I looked up, it was as if I were looking through a skylight!

He was a breath of fresh air; but one day he was fired—suddenly, with no reason given, a mortgage to pay on a big house, and children to support. Later came another man, and then another—always let go like lightning, probably for reasons—sometimes reasons not their fault, sometimes for compelling reasons; but *one big thing was missing!* For some strange reason, the "bureaucracy" had the most phenomenal inability to make peace, guide, understand and be human to humans! By then, I was nearly 60 years old, and guess what? I thought I'd seen every problem in us people; but the upper echelons at ISNA were going to surprise the living daylights out of me! Even 20 years after leaving, I heard the most unbelievable things; but I'll tell you all later.

Actually, I know why the leaders couldn't deal with people; but I hesitate to believe it or to say it. First I'll say that this phenomenon is not at all unique in Islam. People lose their religion, in effect, by trying too hard to accept modern ideas and be a part of material progress. Then their character dissolves, and a "dissolved" character cannot see the difference between true and false, or good and bad. I could likely prove that theologically, but won't live long enough.

There were *many* things that neither Altaf nor I approved of *at all*. I really loved him and he made me laugh. Actually, he was like Malik, my companion at the World Scout Organization: They both made me live longer! He found me a perfect secretary; but he had never had another one, so he was practising

being a boss on me. Later he'd be a husband, a father, and a VIP too. I found him a wife, and kept on recommending her to no avail, until a whole year passed and I was exasperated! "What's the matter with you?" I asked. "She's the absolutely perfect wife!"

He said, "I've been having a hard time keeping it a secret from you until everything was certain; but last night, I met with her father, and the marriage has been arranged; you're invited on such a date to such a place!"

The other two American secretaries, and Khadijah the cleaning lady, were all remarkable women and I both admired and loved them all to death. If, God forbid, they hadn't been there, I'd have suffered too much from the "downsides"—one being that there were so few, and such small windows, that I felt stifled. The ugly building had won some fake prize for great modern architecture; but it was one of the ugliest buildings I'd ever seen. The construction was a catastrophe too: If we added a window anywhere, the ecology of the whole structure would be ruined.

Khadijah knew she would be blind and deaf in her old age, and she is that now, in addition to having epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. She was barely standing up then, but cleaning an enormous building. In a second, she'd become a Muslim, due to reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. You'd think it would only be African Americans who'd accept Islam from reading that book; but she was as white as snow.

Then there was Heather, another brave American woman. She had been married to an Arab who was extremely difficult and finally they'd divorced, so she was raising three children on her own, while working full-time. She was strong, perfectly competent, full of intelligence and diligent about everything—an amazing woman. But she needed to be encouraged and I was always encouraging her. When I left she said she didn't know how she was going to live without me there. But after I left: wonder of wonders! A good Muslim man fell in love with her, married her and took her and her three children away.

Heather had become a Muslim when she was 14, due to the influence of her father, who was an alcoholic and a weak person, but extremely intelligent. He had read and read until he decided that he had to become a Muslim; but he was too weak to do what his daughter did. She believed immediately, began practising and went to high school in perfect hijab—getting along well with everyone. She ran the school newspaper, and was the valedictorian for her class when she graduated. I admired her for her absolutely undaunting spirit. Her three children, were not just three children: They were all *boys*. And one wasn't quite normal. He had ADHD which makes children hyperactive; and it's incurable. He would do things like start off suddenly to cross a road when it would be dangerous; but undaunted, she went through everything without blinking an eye.

Finally, I recommended Heather for her competence and she was promoted to being the Assistant to the Director of Conventions. Now those Conventions are enormous events, to which 30–50,000 Muslims come from all over the US and Canada. They are held in large hotels. Fine: But the first year she had her new post, the Director became ill—stuck in his hotel room, immobile! Heather took over in a second and ran the whole Convention perfectly!

The other woman was Habibe. She was the Administrative Assistant of the Secretary-General and a jewel... an intelligent, competent and modest woman, who was divorced and raising four children. Everyone loved and admired her: There was no wrinkle in her nature. Much later, believe it or not, Habibe became the Secretary-General! I think the word "Acting" was always before her title; but she was the most normal, human, reasonable, and all-round competent chief there had ever been. Oh, how I loved them all!

The land from Prince Muhammad

The Islamic Society of North America was housed in an ugly, big brick building, on a property of a hundred and twenty-four acres, which had been donated by Prince Muhammad of Saudi Arabia. It was farmland, in Plainfield, Indiana—mostly with wheat and cornfields on it, but with little areas of woods here and there, and a stream... There were some sheds or "houselettes" and two great big abandoned old houses, almost mansions, on the property too. Wild deer, raccoons, and a variety of colored birds, lived around those big houses; but no one appreciated either those houses or the wildlife. And there was more! All kinds of wildflowers grew on the property, and in places, rare species of iris and other precious plants and flowers, were "hiding." Behind, and around those abandoned treasures, were herb gardens, still managing to sprout up between the weeds, children's swings... and... I'd like to say... "buried treasure."

Altaf and I were living far away at Ohab's house, and driving a long way to work every day. It turned out that Bibi and Ohab weren't really married anymore; and in yet another room, lived Bibi's sister—a recluse, who refused to talk to her sister, Bibi. She was a practising Muslim, and I rather liked her, so I'd take her shopping in my little orange car, which was used by everyone at ISNA, and by about everyone, everywhere else too... until, one day, alas, that dear car died!

Well, as soon as Bibi's sister was out of that house, she would open her mouth and start complaining—telling me all the sins and crimes of everybody else in the world—especially those of Bibi. I believed her and sympathized for a while, only realizing finally that she had a very bad tongue! She prayed all the time, worked hard in a nearby factory, and had every quality in the world, except for her speech, which was dreadful. That's such a grave sin in Islam that I'd rather not tell you the consequences.

Life in that house was getting difficult because of the jackass sort of talk at the dinner table, and worse. One day Altaf told me we were living in "a dysfunctional family"—a phenomenon I'd never heard of; but there I was looking at it. So finally, I told Dr. Syeed that I was dying in that house; and I either had to be paid a little more, so I could rent a room near there, *or* he could let me live in one of those old houses! (Subtle hints came from me)! I kept after him; but he was impossible about giving straight answers to *any* question. (He was a great diplomat though: Sometimes straight answers and diplomacy don't run together in the same people). Finally I told him that Ohab couldn't keep his pants up: When he bent over they would fall almost down. When he heard that, he said I could live in one of those houses, which was called the Muhajireen.

I walked up a hill and looked at it: Heaven! It had an apartment with a beautiful little kitchen, a lovely living room with big windows looking out on a little meadow, a bedroom and a bath. Upstairs were several bedrooms: There were bathrooms up there too; and two kitchens—one only for me, in the apartment, which I would call home. There were some details too: Like mice, and loud noises from some beasts in the attic.

I got to work—painting, polishing, poisoning and scrubbing. In a few weeks it was looking so spiffy that other employees were coming and trying to make a deal with me: They wanted to trade their ISNA-paid apartments with me so they could live in there. But Dr. Syeed wouldn't let anyone live there except me. I had quite a low salary; but when I was living there, I had no rent, gas, electricity or phone bills. Everything in that house was connected to the main building, so nearly my whole salary went into repairs. I still had my father, and he was poorish; but he had a government pension, and was happy and fine.

I really loved that house. Every weekend or evening, I would paint another room; and I studied the pipes and the bathrooms—figuring out how to cover up a ruined floor with a rug, how to put a bucket under a leak... In not too long I had a house that was almost suitable for a guesthouse. With a tiny bit of an extra contribution from Dr. Syeed, it became a guesthouse for men, with me as "inn keeper," living in my own precious apartment. Through glass doors I saw a meadow, where wild deer, raccoons and birds came, because I put out a saltlick and water. That guesthouse saved the Secretary-General a lot of money, because he could have male interns at ISNA, being paid pittance because they had a free place to live. Oh my heart today! I hope to see that house in Another World!

I got a cat and a kitten, who adored each other—going for long walks in the woods with me. When I was walking home from work, I'd see them sitting above my head, side-by-side on a branch that leaned over the road. When the sun set, they would accompany me to a little hill... and I was ever so happy

with my new home—albeit there were often people-dramas in the guesthouse; but I was created for such things.

Life at work, during the day, was different. In spite of Altaf's company, intelligence and humor, I was seeing so much money wasted, due to simple carelessness, that I was flabbergasted. Too many times, an executive would find an old donation check in the back of some drawer—too old to deposit. And one day, I happened to be the one picking up a phone: A man told me he had donated $80,000 (yes, literally) a long time before; but he had received neither a receipt nor a thank you... and he was mad! That took all my talent; but believe it or not, I succeeded! Another time, the Committee Members were coming (the Majlis ash-Shurah) and there were crates full of unopened mail, looking messy—so Dr. Syeed ordered those boxes to be dumped into the dumpster. Well, then Khadijah saw unopened mail in there, so she climbed down into the trash, and started opening envelopes. There were checks in there from donors! Being no diplomat, Khadijah talked, and soon we all knew what a dreadful mistake Dr. Syeed had made. Fine: It was a mistake, a big one; but one forgives mistakes.

The trouble was that Dr. Syeed was *such* a bad manager, that it was practically a crime. I have no idea what is behind that. He was a nice person, and not dishonest for a penny; but almost... well… I was too busy complaining to him about my next boss down, the extraordinarily incompetent Director of fundraising. Then, heaven help me! I realized that they were *both* catastrophes—each in his way! In secret, I tried to get the people on the Majlis ash-Shurah, to do something: *anything!* One of those men needed to be promoted upstairs into some harmless job. The other, Dr. Syeed, needed a manager under him; but heaven help us all: He needed something else too. He was a complex, great diplomat, with no common sense about people *or* property. He could melt your heart one day, or for years, and then fire you on the spot for saying a sentence that didn't sound loyal to the organization, or to himself — both of which were equated with Islam as such!

While I was dealing with those problems, I became more aware of the other abandoned house, called Ansar House. It had been occupied by a new maintenance man—a really professional one, not like Ohab. That man had done some fine things in there; but he turned out to be paranoid. (In fact, his wife and children were with him in that; but the story was more complex than his delusions).[72]

Well, in a paranoid crisis (mixed with complications galore, which were not at all his fault) he left Ansar House, and fast! I was dying to move there and

72 Folie à deux, shared psychosis, or shared delusional disorder is a psychiatric syndrome in which symptoms of a delusional belief and sometimes hallucinations are transmitted from one individual to another. The same syndrome, shared by more than two people may be called folie à trois, folie à quatre, folie en famille ("family madness"), or even folie à plusieurs ("madness of several").

make another guesthouse—this time for women. But now I had competition! Several staff members, much more important than me, wanted to live there too. Towards the end, two people were disputing, so I became smart: I told Dr. Syeed to say yes to two families. When they heard they'd have to share it, both dropped out! After that, Dr. Syeed said no one could step forward as a candidate: Only "Sister Aminah" may live there: That's me! And I was in seventh heaven: I've never loved a house like I loved Ansar House, before or since.

I was so grateful to Dr. Syeed, that I quoted a verse from the Quran to him. There was a man who had warned his people, but they refused to listen to him. Then, God says in the Quran: "It was said (unto him): Enter Paradise. He said: Would that my people knew with what (munificence) my Lord hath pardoned me and made me of the honored ones!" (Surat Yasin: 26–27).

It seemed God had put me there; but I had the most tender gratitude for Dr. Syeed too. When I had it all ready to be another guesthouse, the whole staff came to dinner, with him and his family. We cooked everything in the living room fireplace, and it seemed to be a blessed evening. I was so grateful to Dr. Syeed, and on his way out, he told me, "We really are very grateful!" Those two houses would let him have many interns, practically free. Oh and I forgot! We would also have Princess Reem staying there in Ansar House! She was the daughter of Prince Muhammad, who had donated the land to "us."

Princess Reem

I was the one to pick her up at the airport, and I had *no* idea what to expect! Maybe a crown, servants, special everything? She was a beautiful and rather unusual kind of a beauty, absolutely lovely really... not in the least bit pretentious; and my car was full of other staff members: We *all* loved and admired her, right away—from Khadijah, who could hardly hear anymore and who was the housecleaner, to Dr. Syeed. She dressed like any European, but wore a hijab wound into a turban; she didn't cover her neck (as one should). With her was her nanny—an older woman, who had been present when she was born, and who took care of her like a chaperone; but Princess Reem had to take care of her nanny just as much.

My car broke down, right outside the airport: That wasted an hour, and imagine! I was so embarrassed but she took everything in her stride. Actually, she was a known photographer, who traveled all over the world and photographed scenes and people in all walks of life. She was quite a worldly woman, thirty-some years old—yes, worldly; but not at all proud. Everyone could talk to her, have her attention. Her father, Prince Muhammad, was a son of King Faisal's.

Well, I finally got her home to Ansar House, where her father let her stay with me, as I was a "dorm mother" there—being almost sixty. She and her

nanny could have stayed in a four star hotel instead (there were none better) but her father entrusted her to my care; and I was delighted! Well, we were *all* delighted that she would be there, for over a month I think; but I had my special reasons. I was extremely lonely there at ISNA, and critical of the Islam people practised. Never did I cease longing for the discernment there had been in the Tariqah, and I was full of spiritual and philosophical questions. Well, Princess Reem was exceedingly well-educated: She had read books by Frithjof Schuon and was the only one around who understood me at all. Since she lived in "my" guesthouse, I often had her to myself. I'd have to make her quite humble lunches and we would eat together. She knew Seyyed Hossein Nasr, my great professor, and he would later write the text for a book of her photographs.

At ISNA, and when she invited us all out to a real restaurant, we could all ask her questions. She told us frankly about kings and queens; but of course I forget all she said. Mainly, I was struck by something new: A worldly person, who had no trace of pretension! That's practically impossible; but I see impossible things every day: God has the most imagination, and only He could have created us humans!

Two things struck me hard about her visit. When I think of her and her family, I feel as if I'm reeling from having been hit in the solar plexus. One reason was rather minor, while being symptomatic of the terrible faults in our bosses. The other seems so serious to me, that I've never been able to go back and visit ISNA, 19 years after I stopped working there.

The minor problem was that we had a staff member, who said he was in love with her: We all knew that, but she did not. For a while I thought all was well, and I gave him advice, since he asked me. "Well, if I were a man in love with her, I'd tell her thus and so, and I'd give her everything I had, so she could make her own home, just the way she'd like it... and in such and such a lovely place, if she's happy there." His answer was, in so many words: "She's rich, and will build her own everything." Then he told me about other princesses he had wanted to marry, and I realized that he liked money, ease and fame. She was entrusted to us, especially to the two bosses; but also to me. Seeing that no one was doing anything, I started out judiciously one day: "I assume you know how to take care of yourself in such and such situations…" Surprised, she asked me, "What situation?" and when I told her, she was furious with the two men in charge, who should have put that man in his place. Then her father was even more furious, and that was the end of an embarrassing story; but I learned more about crude characters, and about the false virtue of not standing up to say something.

Made from my own heart

Those two guesthouses were dear to my heart, especially Ansar House. Although there were awkward matters to do with keeping them up, because they'd been neglected for so long, I managed to take care of the houses and the interns just fine. In Ansar House, there were large windows looking out on fields and woods; the wild deer came, and I had Night Jasmine planted out front, so there was a perfume of Jasmine in the air.

Often, I went for walks in places where I could tell that hardly anyone had been for ages: Rare and common wildflowers were hidden in the woods, and there were several little sheds or houselettes I explored. In one I found thousands of dollars worth of supplies, unopened and wasting away—within easy walking distance of the main building. No one cared; and I felt sick. Far be it from me to really care about crates of fluorescent light bulbs; but I worked in the fundraising department: Pious Muslims in the US and Canada were supporting our organization with their donations.

False virtues

Religious people can have so much virtue as regards calumny and backbiting, that it can take decades or a lifetime to stop something. It's as if people try to be virtuous, or nice, while those who are incompetent stay on top. At worst, the devil gets away with murder; but nobody breathes a word, so as not to backbite. Shall we talk or not, because backbiting is a grave fault? I think we'd better talk if what's false or bad will win otherwise. There's a saying similar to this one by Dante, wrongly attributed to Edmund Burke: "The hottest fires in hell burn most brightly for those who remain neutral in a moral crisis." May Allah help us all stand up for righteousness and truth.

I tried my best; but as time went on, I thought I should leave if I possibly could. I had severely criticized *both* my highest bosses. Either one could fire me in a second if he found out; but I was nearing 60, and had nowhere to go! The people *above* those men, were the members of the Majlis ash-Shurah, and some took minor steps, but seemed more critical of my criticizing than of the dreadful faults I was criticizing! Once I overheard one well-respected doctor tell some others, "Allah does not like that kind of talk." (Mine). Millions of dollars must have been thrown away after that before they all woke up. Not only that, but they had no imagination for the precarious position I had put myself in to try and help. I was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea!

After I'd been working there for three years, I was up against several brick walls—not actually due to any one individual, but to the cumulative effect of a type of decadence. It was not at all the active, aggressive decadence of us Occidental Westerners, but the passivity of traditional civilizations. To be more

concrete: Born Muslims (and born religious people everywhere) are prone to phenomenal passivity: There is peace between the cat and the mouse, while the shop falls in ruin. And nobody says a word.

Until recently, I was running around in circles, exasperated by this experience in my past, and not understanding what I'd seen every day, with my own two astonished eyes. I just realized that this was one of the two major types of modern world decadence that I'd read about; but who could have imagined how true it was?

I quit: No more port in a storm!

Finally, one day I was handed a letter by another, very (nice but) bossy boss, saying that henceforth he—and only he—would be in charge of the Muhajireen and Ansar Houses. *Only* he would decide who could and couldn't live there, *and*, as of a month from then, my two cats would have to go.

I understood the why and wherefore of each sentence, and what that implied for me. For one thing, it meant the end of my human happiness; and for another, it meant that a young party girl, who was extremely messy, would be sharing the lovely kitchen, where I lived in Ansar House. That bossy boss of mine, quite liked and needed her; and letting her live free in "my" guesthouse was like giving her a fantastic raise in pay.

I thought for a minute or two. Then I called my dear Father-puss: "Would you like to move to Pakistan with me? You can leave that distressing home for the aged, and we can live in a house together—have some years of living closer together before we die." (He was 90 then)! To my surprise, he said, "Let's go!" He was a Christian, and it's a Muslim country; and he was pretty much a beer alcoholic, which I knew would cause me some chagrin; but we were both ready for adventure.

Within ten minutes, I was in the office of my highest boss, Dr. Syeed, where my bossiest boss happened to be talking to him. (I had a lot of bosses there—all men). Us bossed women, aside from myself, were three, to my mind, magnificent and brave American converts to Islam. Each one had a story, and I've loved and admired all three right into my old age.

I told them both that I loved them. I did. And that I wasn't quitting because of that letter. I wasn't. But the time had come for me to retire and have my own family—three orphan girls I had met and chosen in Pakistan. My highest boss, Dr. Syeed, said that they at ISNA were my family; but I said no: That was an illusion. The guests in my two houses were interns, with their own families and lives. Now I was ready to have my own children and to see my father into his grave, instead of leaving him to die in an apartment building in West Lafayette.

Dr. Syeed, who had much charisma and some quite Muslim-type virtues, said that my Christian father would be most welcome to live on the property; but I said no, he was practically an alcoholic, and he also had some streaks of craziness at that time: It wouldn't work. Not to be dissuaded, he accepted all that, as Muslims often will, all over the world: Everything is forgiven in old age. The elderly are honored no matter what.

Goodbye, oh Muslim world of America!

The day I left, I had to write my own recommendation, because the boss concerned was the one who couldn't do a solitary thing for himself. When any one of us on the staff had anything to say about those above us, we were directed to speak only to a certain man on the Majlis ash-Shurah. I had told that man all the problems I'd faced, why I was leaving, and how incompetent and helpless my boss was. I did not say "Fire him," which they did 19 years later, fine! I said he needed a first class assistant, right away.

So on my last day, I was sitting opposite my boss, and he had just signed the recommendation I'd had to write myself (just as I'd had to write all his Annual Reports for him, and do every single thing). While I was still sitting there, the phone rang. It was the man on the Shurah responsible for employee complaints. He told my boss what I'd said about him. If I hadn't been able to retire, at that precise moment, I would have been unable to be recommended for any job in the future: That boss never forgave me; but the man on the Majlis ash-Shurah will have to be forgiven for more. He betrayed a trust, and would keep any staff member from telling the truth again—at least until he himself got forgotten. And the entire organization was sending one million dollars a year through the hands of that one incompetent boss alone. If I'd gone on working there, specifically in the fundraising division, I'm afraid I'd have lost my sincerity.

Nineteen years later they fired that boss, in one second—giving him not the slightest human consideration. That was after he must have lost a fortune for the donors, many of whom were on the Majlis ash-Shurah, but who wouldn't listen to me. As for Dr. Syeed, they "promoted him upstairs" with dignity, but only after he too had lost the organization hundreds of thousands of dollars; and that was partly due to his absolute neglect of the property donated by Prince Muhammad. About 15 years later, they brought him back—making him more important than he was in the first place. When I heard that, I felt ill—*although* he *is* a genius as a speaker, and has many virtues.

Only one of my complaints was negligence: The other was that no one knew back then, or knows today, how to deal with *people*. It may not be necessary to fire people, suddenly as if they'd committed a crime. Criticizing, guiding, warning, being kind and re-training can solve many problems; but ISNA,

to this day, makes brutal decisions, maybe due to changes in regime (?). Whatever the cause: The administrators behaved and still behave in an inhuman and un-Islamic way. I will not go back to visit.

After I left, no one took proper care of my precious Ansar House. Since the heat tapes were not turned on in the winter, the water pipes burst, and instead of repairing them, people had to move out. It was abandoned for years, until I returned once: Sacred things I had left on the walls, were mildewing in a pile of rotting wood. Thieves had stolen everything of value and there was a "No trespassing" sign out front. Years later, drug dealers had set up shop in there, so the remaining parts of the house had to be hauled away. Now there's grass where Ansar House had been; and Muhajireen House had about the same fate.

Never will I return to look; but I've been told that some flower bulbs I planted still give a few flowers every year. You see, once I planted 1,000 bulbs of tulips, daffodils, irises and lilies—in gratitude for being rightly guided; but also because my Pakistani brother, Shahid, had brought me a picture: It was of Razia, the first orphan I planned to adopt. The two ideas went together: I decided to adopt an orphan to show gratitude for being led out of a Gordian Knot of errors. Adopting an orphan was the last of my ideas: All the others had failed.

Now it seems that the property donated by Prince Muhammad, may be sold. Perhaps someone else will make it bloom again... Until recently, I was running around in circles, exasperated by this experience in my past, and not understanding what I'd seen every day, with my own two astonished eyes. I just realized that this was one of the two major types of modern-world decadence that I'd read about; but who could have imagined how true it was?

PROOF

Chapter 25
Swachamina Village[73]

"He who belongs to Me, I belong to him."

A feminine, Berber proverb

(Lifelong, I believed this to be a hadith qudsi, as have others. It is absolutely true regarding the "heart" of God, and it is proven true by other ahadith qudsi, like: "If my servant comes to Me walking, I go to him rushing!")

Changing plans in mid-air

A Muslim colleague at the Islamic Society was from Murree in Pakistan. That seemed the ideal place to retire in, as it's a beautiful mountain town, full of foreigners, and a tourist resort. I would be nearer the comfort my father and I were used to in the US and my colleague's father owned The Continental Hotel there, knew everything, and was prepared to help me find a house and settle down.

Finding that perfect, I got on the plane—of course alone. A month later, my adopted (well, the one who adopted me) Pakistani brother, Shahid, would accompany my father there. He was brave to volunteer, because my dear father, at age 90, was a bit out of his mind, complaining constantly, and having extreme moods. Actually, he was paranoid due to old age; but I didn't know that yet. Wherever we went, people complained about his constant griping. Quite a strange phenomenon coming from such a dear and humor-loving person.

I was sitting happily in the plane, knowing that I was being delivered into the hands of my colleague's wealthy father, who would help at every step;

73 Swachamina means "The Pure Land," which is a Buddhist term for paradise, and used here because our village, although small and poor, seemed beautiful and pure. Swachamina is a Hindi or Telugu word. As for the real name, it has been veiled for the privacy of its people.

however, sitting next to me, was a nice Pakistani man—and we soon started talking. I told him where I was going and why; that my 90-year-old father would come in a month, and how I'd become a Muslim.

My neighbor in the plane said "No!" I should definitely *not* go to Murree! For my father's sake, I should go to Abbottabad, a small, flat city surrounded by mountains, far North of Islamabad. He explained that Abbottabad has the largest free hospital in the country. If we lived in Murree, we'd be snowed in for months each winter—a fact that could be hard on my father, as we'd be far from doctors and grocery stores—dependent upon people who might not be dependable. So guess what? I literally had to change my mind in mid-air, before landing! A friend of my brother was picking me up, so I asked him to plunk me down in Abbottabad, where I knew not a soul, instead of sending me off to Murree, where a wealthy helper was awaiting my arrival. An American woman alone, with no protector was unheard of; but when I have to do something, I trust in God. Usually, I take precautions and plan ahead; *then* I trust in Him. This time I had no choice.

The man in the green turban

When I was at Customs, having just arrived at Islamabad airport in Pakistan, a friendly officer asked me who I was and why I'd come to live there. After we'd talked a while, he told me how to renew my visa regularly, until I could become a citizen, which was what I wanted. He said, "Absolutely do *not* go to the man in the green turban, who is responsible for visa renewals." Instead, he gave me a paper with the name on it of a good man I should go to as an "escape" from a troublesome character. I didn't ask for details about green turbans; but my impression was of a false jihad against foreigners. Creepy. Later I found out that a green turban only denotes good things—but imagine! Illusions and fears don't help. Dante said, "Do not be afraid; our fate cannot be taken from us; it is a gift." Today, that fills me with wondrous faith; but many times in life, I'd been weakened by useless fear of the unknown.

Scary men in the dark

Then I went to an Inn, as those cost less than hotels; but there was no restaurant in it, so I had to figure out how to get somewhere to eat. To save money, I took a kind of bus instead of a taxi. Well there I was, in the back of a primitive, short bus, called a Suzuki, on a dark night, and all those in there were men, who looked like either manual laborers or crooks. Their clothes were very dirty and it looked as if they were all coming home from having been in dirt all day, or else they were rough characters: I couldn't tell which. It was

too dark. At least there were no green turbans in there: I'd have run away and paid for a cab instead!

I had a piece of paper, with the restaurant's name on it, and although I was half afraid of them, I handed that paper to the man seated next to me. There was some kind of a window between the driver and the back part of the Suzuki where we were sitting on benches, and my neighbor knocked on that window behind the driver, who stopped. All the men got out—for a conference outside. Having been told by my Pakistani colleagues at ISNA, that if I took a taxi there, the driver could drop me off anywhere and abandon me after taking my purse and my watch, I was wary. The Pakistanis who worked at the Islamic Society had not wanted me to move there; and they'd told me all the scariest possibilities to dissuade me. Well, those men climbed back in, and while I was expecting to be murdered, the driver went off of his route and drove me straight to the restaurant named on my paper!

Then some of those men got out and helped me down from the Suzuki, so I finally had a good look at them. They were kind and good, manual laborers, dirty and exhausted after a day's work; but as nice to me as if I were everyone's mother. They all stayed with me until being sure I had a waiter who would see to it that I got home safely. I had no idea; but women never went out alone like I did—not that I had any choice. Even if my father had come with me, instead of coming a month later, he'd have been a handicap. At least I knew Arabic and could read most signs. Urdu is written in the Arabic alphabet and Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis all use many English words, because England owned India, and Pakistan is a perhaps unfortunate offshoot of India. That's a moot question. It seems to be an unblessed country sometimes; but there are exceedingly great saints buried in its soil, conferring an invisible blessing.

Well, I managed to talk, with words, pictures and eyes. And even with those manual laborers in the dark in the back of a Suzuki, I was perfectly alright in that country. Nearly everyone was as good as gold with me, and they loved meeting an American who had become a Muslim 40 years earlier. When I went there, I was about 60; now at 80, I've been in Islam for 60 years! Born Muslims love seeing "staunch" American Muslims.

Before Sammy's arrival

In my first month, I was totally alone. My father was to arrive a month later, by which time I had to have a home and furniture for him; and I hadn't yet any servant to go with me and show me how to do things—not even a servant whose language I didn't know. All that was yet to come, and every move I made was an adventure, or rather it was like pulling teeth: Hard. I lived in that inn, and had to move around and negotiate—never quite realizing how strange it was for everyone to see an American woman alone.

Of course I knew about the Islamic institution of having a man protector for a woman; but it hadn't sunk in yet that the idea pertained to me. A strange and wonderful thing happened though: People just adopted me, right and left! When the bank's workers were on strike and it was locked up, the bank's President saw me, dismayed, looking in the door, when he was inside. He opened the door and asked me what I needed. I said I'd come to cash a check for 10,000 rupees, as I had to pay this or that, etc. He took that much out of his pocket, and just gave me his own money, saying I could pay it back when the strike ended! And he himself looked after me, even giving me advice when I was intending to adopt a little eight-year-old girl. She went into his office with me and opened his desk drawers, with no manners at all; so the next time I was alone in there, he explained the different kinds of Pakistani children to me. It seems that children from country villages often have no manners, unless you catch them when they're young enough. He advised me to send her home, and acted like my father—although I was 60 and he was maybe 40. Actually, that little girl, named Sidra (lotus flower) was a dear; but I was too old to bring her up, and she was a wild thing. Once I feared for her life on a rickshaw ride: She was hanging on with one hand, with the rest of her hanging out the door; she was having lots of fun while I was getting a stomach ache.

That cute, wide-eyed little rascal and I had to sleep in the same bed once; and she was still up, talking and playing, in the middle of the night; but I hardly knew a word of *spoken* Urdu! (The *writing* was easier due to my Arabic). She was quite savvy about the ways of the world and knew all about TVs and such. Well, when I was sound asleep, she started babbling and opening my umbrella in our bed. Glaring at her, but knowing no Urdu, I got a brainstorm: "PAKISTANI CHANNEL OFF!" I shouted. Never outdone, she glared right back at me: "AMREEKA CHANNEL OFF!" I had to laugh; but pushed her down and covered her up.

The screens didn't fit well, and she'd turned on the lights, so lots of mosquitos got in. Come morning, I had 100 bites, and she had none! I think it's because she thrived on hot peppers: Vultures won't touch the bodies of dead people who eat cayenne pepper, so I guess the mosquitoes knew better than to bite her, but they sure liked my blood!

I'd moved there to retire, with my father; but I'd also found three orphans to adopt, on a previous trip. She wasn't the only one—just the first to stay with me before my father even arrived. My brother, who adopted me, had driven me all around in the countryside, visiting families in which one or more parents had passed away, or which were too poor to raise all their children. Sidra had sidled up to me and made such irresistible looks with her eyes, that I couldn't resist her, although her poor but happy family had seven children, and they *all* wanted to be adopted. The children loved their parents perfectly, but hoped I'd educate them, and eventually take them to the United States for a better life.

Although they were healthy, lovely children, their father's job was only making tea, in a little shop about one by two yards big, containing a huge kettle, under which he made a fire. When the tea was just right, he'd deliver it to the nearby shopkeepers. That dear family was extremely poor, but happy together. Many years later, my Pakistani brother, Shahid, told me that their father had created a business with a partner, and become well-to-do, successful!

Robbed and left naked in his underwear!

To find a house to rent, I went to some nice real estate agents, who had been partners for 20 years. Indeed, they found a good big house, with enough room for my father, me and my three orphan girls, 8, 14 and 18 . No sooner had I bought some furniture and moved in, than I saw the headlines in a newspaper: One of my real estate agents had escaped, but the other was left naked aside from his underwear, in their office—right in the middle of town! A gang had arrived in a flash, broken all the windows, and stripped the man who was their target!

That was not the first time I'd hear about such gang raids. It was common knowledge that one could hire gangs for revenge, and in between jobs, they made fast raids on houses—stripping them of everything in minutes! Later, I met the son of the embarrassed real estate agent. He made little of it, saying that his family did things like that too, to the enemy family that had hired the hoodlums. He could find a gang to help me, he said, if ever I needed such a thing!

Trusting in the Lord. while shaking in my boots

After much difficulty and adventure, I was living in our house, with two children, furniture, sheets, dishes—everything ready for my ninety-year-old father's arrival. But there was an enormous problem: I had only and exactly 6,000 rupees left, and that was exactly what a cab driver charged to take me to the airport. Not having been able to reach my father for months, I had no idea if he was actually coming with money to take care of us all—orphans too—or not. In the beginning we would have only his pension to live on: Mine hadn't started yet. If I got to that airport, and he didn't come, I didn't even have change to call my brother's family in a faraway district. *And* I'd been told that Pakistani airports are famous for crime and thieves. Not only that: I'd been told that all the thieves in Pakistan got trained in the airport! Well I trusted in the Lord; but don't ask me if I was calm: I was a wreck. I had no idea back then that one was supposed to trust in the Lord and not worry: I *did* some extraordinarily brave things, trusting, but shaking in my boots. God seems to

have accepted that. Now that I've learned better, I can keep worry out of my mind. Now I just get a stomach ache!

People started pouring into the huge waiting arena where people come in off of planes until crowds were bristling all around me. Suddenly, I caught sight of a face I'd seen once before: A cousin of my brother's! He was sufficient salvation. I went over and said: "Assalamu alaykum; what are *you* doing here?" He answered, "My brother is arriving; I have to be here!" Well, his "brother" was really his cousin: Pakistanis hardly know the difference, and his cousin was my adopted brother, Shahid, who had been brave enough to bring my precious Father-puss. Soon, there they were, with Shahid pushing an airport wheelchair! My father was beaming, looking proud of himself; but my poor brother looked exasperated. He'd had a rough time, taking care of my father, Sammy, who had become exceedingly irritable over the past few years. (He was actually paranoid, but I didn't realize that yet. Later, I had to see a psychiatrist in secret—to find out if anything could be done. It seems the brain often shrinks in old age, and causes personality changes. That psychiatrist gave me a medicine to hide in his food: In a few hours, he was his old self! It was a good lesson to me—a lesson I'd need: There can be physical reasons for character changes).

In one airport, where they'd had to change planes, my father had lost his temper, because no wheelchair had been brought for him. Seeing one at a distance, he went to get it, with Shahid trying to hold him back. In fact, there *was* no wheelchair there; but there *was* a huge mirror in which my poor father saw one! He crashed into the mirror and fell right down, at age 90! Shahid pulled him up and comforted him. Then on they went to the next flight, during which my poor brother stood up in the aisle so my father could sleep on their two seats put together. For 20 years, I remained grateful!

So, we were hugging each other; I was congratulating him and he was making jokes, talking in rhyme, quoting things, as usual. We got him into the taxi cab and drove him back—over a three-hour drive—showing him the beautiful views. The ride from the Islamabad airport to where we lived in Abbottabad is exhilarating. One sees high mountains and beautiful fields. Workmen who are tilling the soil, spread out their prayer rugs, which they have in their pockets or around their waist. They spread them on the ground and pray on the fields they're working in. On Fridays or at prayer times, you can go by a mosque which is outside and see the poorest looking people there, praying in the sun. It's extremely impressive and makes an indelible effect on one's soul to see such poor people adhering to their Islam. The rich aren't half as good and I gather that's pretty much the way it is everywhere, and in every religion.

Once Muhammad had a vision of Paradise, and said it was mostly filled with people who had been poor in this world. In another hadith, he said that the poor enter paradise 500 years before those who have been wealthy in this world. That gives one an idea of the difference. Poverty is really a blessing.

Why? Precisely because it keeps one from being worldly. *It actually gives one spiritual intelligence,* which one can't have by being worldly.

Although my way of not being worldly was naïve—just not reading newspapers, or watching TV, or listening to radio; over the years it added up and sometimes people would say something and I would know much about them that nobody else would notice. Many things happened in Bloomington which struck me hard; but even Sayyidah Latifah was blinded or was one who participated. Once Sidi Xyz had many of us convinced that there was going to be a bad period on earth, so he built an enormous "house," called a root cellar—big enough to live in, and stocked with long-lasting, nitrogen-packed food. We were all supposed to contribute $5,000 and have our food stocked up in there. Latifeli was annoyed because I wanted nothing to do with it; but that kind of insecurity and planning is spiritually sick. If there's a catastrophe, one would do much better to go and live under a tree in the woods until death came; and I think I could prove that with quotes from the Quran or the Bible—albeit life is a form of worship. We are supposed to try to stay alive.

My Christian father in a Muslim land

One day in Pakistan, before my father had the special medicine that made him feel like a normal person again, he was very, very grumpy with me. And he said, "Maudie, you don't know how to take care of an old man. You're making me die sooner. We both need a servant to take care of us. You're just as badly off as I am, and you're impossible... and not very smart. You don't know how to do this or anything else." He went on and on. But I put his dinner down and then turned around, walking out. Then I stopped, and turned around: "Well if you'd have been any smarter, I think you'd have gotten a smarter daughter!" He burst out laughing and was happy again. He said, "Oh Maudie, that's what I always loved about you: you're a good sport." And he put his arms around me and we hugged each other.

But he did have a serious mood problem—being too afraid of a fly, or a spot on the wall, suspicious, irritable. Keeping it a secret from him, I went to a psychiatrist, where I described several incidents. The psychiatrist told me that he was paranoid, and that personality changes can occur in old age, because the brain shrinks. I went home with a medicine for the problem and another medicine for the side-effects of the medicine: Soon he was his old self again, and that was the way he died too, praise the Lord! I'm wary of much of modern medicine; but I sure am grateful when it works. A hadith says that God sends down diseases; and for each disease, He sends down a cure. That means that we are supposed to look for those cures, which may be medicines, operations... any kind of treatment. The trouble with most modern medicine is that it goes too far: People lose their belief in the Afterlife and then want to be kept alive

by desperate means. Too many medicines are used in ignoring dreadful side effects, because people want to be kept alive at great expense and when they're in dreadful condition.

Our servants

We had from one to four servants at various times, and appreciated them tremendously, paid them generously, and were like friends and family with everyone—with ups 'n downs.

One day my bedroom window broke, so I told our man-servant named Sarvar, to get a piece of glass cut at such a store and put it in. He argued with me; but I didn't understand his Urdu, so I kept saying do it, and he kept mumbling. Finally, I practically yelled: Just DO IT! That afternoon, I looked in my room, and there was a piece of cardboard, carefully taped into the hole! I finally realized that the dear man had no idea how to even order a piece of glass! I knew he'd understand this time, if I spoke English, so I said: "Just like New York!" He understood me perfectly, and we both burst out laughing! Ali was a professional servant, who knew everything; but I'd only hired Sarvar because he needed a job and he was Ali's brother-in-law; but I loved Sarvar and his whole family too.

We wanted to pay our servants generously, because most people take terrible advantage of the poor, who often need jobs so badly that they'll accept any or no wage, for food. The trouble was that we, meaning I, was broke at the end of most months, so Sarvar often loaned us money until my father's next pension would come. He was a dear. Ali, who was supposedly the cook, couldn't cook as well as I can, which is no recommendation; but he was an all-round superb employee, taking care of my father and me as if we were his family members—and he knew everything—even English! Zebu, our only woman servant, was not competent; but she had love. Eventually I let her go—having no idea that Ali had a mean, jealous and greedy streak: He would not allow her to come back in through our metal gate, to visit us!

No one told me about this either, but for awhile, one of Zebu's married daughters and her husband, lived with us. Ali would not give them "breakfast," during Ramadan, so they had to walk to Zebu's house before dawn every day. That was outrageous, as hospitality is a highly esteemed virtue in Islam: That couple needed help for a few months; it was easy for us to keep them; but Zebu was always poor. So as not to tattletale, that couple did not tell us what Ali was doing, until it was too late. He was mean to other servants and their families: I had no idea that was possible.

Another man, very incompetent, but nice, only slept in our house every night, as a guard. During the day, he was supposedly the gatekeeper, and he did a few odd jobs; but on the whole those servants were each there for small

reasons. Once I gave that gatekeeper a shopping list—groceries for me and my father: Two apples, two this, three that. He came home with huge sacks of each thing, and stacked those sacks outside the door: The sacks were too full and numerous to fit in the kitchen. He bought two sacks full of apples; but I laughed and had him take most of that back. He *was* good at sleeping in our house all night, and he did a few other things nicely.

The love of money

Pakistan is one of the poorest countries (its next door neighbor, India, is the poorest in the world, and highly populated) albeit there are plenty of wealthy people there; but the poverty is so extreme in some places that it leads to crime, and to what I'd call a disease: There's a social Wall of China between the rich and the poor, and an inordinate, crass love of money. People do not trust one another, or help their neighbors in ways that require the slightest loss either. Actually, looking back, I can't remember any wealthy people, or *any* people, who gave away money, aside from miniscule amounts to beggars. Beggars were plentiful, and some were frauds. Once I was about to hand money to a man, when a passerby intervened. "Don't give him anything; he's rich and a fraud!" I stood out for being charitable—like a sore thumb! I am *not* extraordinary; but there was no competition. The wealthiest people were the most stingy—exactly as was predicted by Muhammad.[74]

As soon as we were settled in our rented house, I was invited to meals, by everyone on our street. Of course I was friendly, asked questions and learned. Always interested in names, I asked one family what each of their names meant. One child had never thrived: Her growth was slightly stunted, and her name meant "the love of money!" I could not believe that; but didn't tell them (because I knew they wouldn't listen, and would freeze in alienation). I didn't tell them either, that there are ahadith about people *and* animals, who had names that were disagreeable like that. When their names were changed, they began to thrive. I hope that child chose another name for herself when she got older.

There was a very nice young man in that family too; and the oldest girl I was adopting was as good as gold, pious and beautiful. So I showed them her picture and said I hoped to find a good and pious husband for her—like the young man there. They all began to fight in Urdu, whereas the young man liked what I was saying and wanted to meet her. His uncle told me: So-and-so will not get married until we have thoroughly investigated the bank account of the bride-to-be's parents! Never did I go to their house again; but that uncle owned the house we were renting. One day he just announced that he was

74 See Appendix V: Muhammad's Predictions About These End Times We Are In Now.

building another part on our roof. The construction would be outrageously difficult for us to bear. We fled to a nicer place, far from that family!

Sarvar's tender eyes

My father was spoiled by everyone in Pakistan: People came to visit him, children gathered around him, and he had every service—thriving on all the affection and honor he received. The visits were due to the respect Muslims have for the elderly. As for the children, he was a magnet wherever he was; but there, he would hardly learn a word of Urdu. Still, our "cook," Ali, brought him a blackboard and chalk, so all the children in the neighborhood came to be taught to draw. We also had a badminton court in the frontyard; so that drew little ones too. When he needed something, like a haircut, Ali was so knowledgeable: He got a barber to come to our house.

The only children who didn't work out well, were my orphans. Although the oldest was an angel, the other two had too many conflicts and problems. They were from two different families, which disputed with one another; one girl had a brother who smoked some drug on our front lawn; my father didn't like the two youngest ones, neither did our lady servant, Zebu... and I saw that I was too old to raise children! So I decided to send them back to their happy, but poor homes. Then I put my hands up and prayed: "Allahumma, I will adopt the next poor and good family I come across; and I'll help by paying the parents to raise their *own* children. This raising of children is too hard for me; but whatever pious and honest family I see first, I'll consider sent by Thee."

In the back of my mind, I had the idea that the family might be Zebu's: She had to earn a living for her *ten* children! (Three boys had died too!) But she was healthy and cleaning several houses on our street. Still, I asked the grocer, if she and her children were pious and honest. He said, "Yes, quite;" but then I forgot about it. Now Ali did not like Zebu, and she was not a competent worker either: I was extremely fond of her, but finally let her go—expecting her to come back and visit, as she worked in other houses nearby.

When he arrived in Pakistan, my father was used to drinking a *lot* of beer; but being a Muslim country, Pakistan forbids the sale of alcohol, except to foreigners, so I had to travel far to a Christian place to buy beer for him—and, as a Muslim, I was actually forbidden to do that. (By Islamic law, Christians and Jews are welcome to live in Muslim lands, if they pay a tax. Then they are exempt from military service; the Muslim armies must protect them, and they can act according to *their* religion—not Islam). Long before, my father had stopped smoking instantly, when a doctor told him he had emphysema; but he had started drinking beer the same day. If I didn't scold him, that was because the same doctor told me that he was a very nervous person, who was

instinctively treating himself. Now don't ask me anything; but there we were. Sometimes I can't figure out how to do everything right at the same time.

It was soon after my father's arrival that my banker had told me that he had a cousin, who was a fine cook: would we hire him? Since my father was about to die of starvation (at age 90, he had to force himself to eat) we talked it over, and soon had Ali, a superb employee, but no cook. He spoke English, had worked for American companies in several countries—and my father really liked him. He asked me what we paid him; and that was, I forget how much, but very little; and it was the exact same amount my father spent on beer each month! So at that instant, he stopped drinking beer! Then he started drinking real "buffalo" milk. He loved that and always had a glass of it near his bed. (A so-called buffalo, is an enormous kind of cow, that gives many times as much milk as our cows). Well, then Ali got paid more, and invited my father to come to the top of a mountain to see his stunning little house—an adorable building, with a splendid view. I would have loved to live in a house and place like that.

Ali arranged for us to be driven to his mountain, as far up as cars could go. Then two of his men-friends stepped out of nearby houses, and a chair appeared. They sat my father down, and *carried* him up the mountain, on that chair, to Ali's precious house! Our hearts melted; and Ali always took care of us as if we were of his own family... and was he ever street smart too! He kept us from being cheated, and managed all our affairs.

Well, that day, my father's hands and feet got too cold up there, so Ali's daughter came out and rubbed them, while his wife brought soup; but due to the cold, we had to leave early anyway. Our other man-servant, Sarvar, walked me down the mountain. He was Ali's brother-in-law, who we had only hired to please Ali; but I was and still am, fond of Sarvar, his wife, and his ten sons and two daughters.

Actually, we needed a lot of help, because my father didn't have pain; but he had the most awful things wrong with him. We needed many extra hands. And little by little he stopped drinking milk anymore *or* eating, *even* if he got exactly what he liked most. Gradually, his mouth, then his throat and stomach, became lined with a fungus. You can't stop eating and drinking for long; but his body simply did not want food. A good doctor was treating him; but one night, my father told me that he was losing his eyesight. I was appalled; but gave him a medicine and assured him he'd be fine in the morning. Very far, *way* far back in my mind, I thought he might be dead; but he loved life so much that I told him he'd be fine out of charity.

The next day, I was too upset to go into his room, so I told Sarvar to go in. Soon thereafter, I went in; but Sarvar had left him naked on his bed, and he was asleep. Mad, I found Sarvar out in the garden and asked: "Why in the world have you left him uncovered? You know he can need four heaters on

around him!" (Anyway, I was the one who had been bathing him, private parts and all, for weeks). Sarvar gave me such a sweet look that I'll never forget it; but he's quite a good-hearted person all the time, so I just went back in to put warm clothes on my father. He had died! Ali and Sarvar had washed his body; and Ali had gone to the bazaar to buy new clothes. He was soon home with an enormous bowlful of fresh, red rose petals which we would scatter all over his grave! We had only lived together there for eight months, before that sad day. And he died for no reason really: His body just didn't want to eat *or* live anymore.

I hadn't realized it, but right across the street from our house, was a high, thick wall on the other side of which was a Christian church, and such a dear little graveyard as I'd never imagined. Like our house, it looked out onto the high, snow-covered mountains of Afghanistan; and it was half wild, and half full of cultivated flowers mixed with wildflowers.

Ali was so efficacious that everything was arranged in hours; and our house was soon full of Christians, praying for him and being good to me. I'd had no idea there were so many Christians around: They seemed to spring up out of the ground as soon as my father died. All the missionaries I knew and loved came too; and our Muslim neighbors were bringing cooked dishes and saying their ritual prayers in our house. I was not exactly sad: Only the night before he died, I'd begun to suffer from seeing him dying. But I couldn't talk to him about death: He was someone who loved *life* too much, and although he believed and prayed—at least after age 75—he never resembled a pious person. He was ever his same, playful, life-loving self.

The best father in the world

Soon, I was face to face with the rather glowering, but usually nice, "Padre" of the church—the man who was responsible for that graveyard. "Don't you *dare* put anything Muslim on his tombstone." "Oh no! I was thinking of: 'The Best Father in the World!'" He smiled and went away; whereas I went home to think.

I did put those words on his tombstone, and it's rather a Muslim thing to do, in that parents are so special in Islam. Those words were also very refreshing like he had been; there wasn't another interesting sentence on any tombstone: They were all as dull as dishwater. But I was also serious: He had been such a good father that I'd been blessed lifelong by having been his daughter. Still, I had to have God's presence on his tomb, but how? Well, the Psalms are revelation for Christians, Muslims and Jews: Maybe the Padre didn't know that; but I found a perfect verse in the Psalms. I say perfect because my father was so in love with the world, that his best recourse was the mercy of God,

not his own piety, so I added: "Have mercy on me, Oh God, *for the sake of thy loving kindness*."

The funeral took place immediately, with a missionary translating the sermon into my ear. As usual, I loved and agreed with all but one sentence. Then many Christians dug his grave and built a wooden casket, which was lowered into the earth, while people I'd never seen before were praying all around. Then Ali spread a carpet of red rose petals over the soil, and the tombstone was placed on top of my father's grave.

My heart was glad: I'd known he was dying and was comforted by all the praying in our house and around his grave; but the Christians started trying to convert me straight away—asking why didn't I read the Bible? I went in my room and came out with my Bible, which was chock full of notes: They could see I read it a lot! Then one said I needed to learn *from a Christian*. So, I told them I was reading the marvelous Book of John every week with a Christian missionary! Oh how I loved that missionary, Cindy! But she thought I'd change religions as soon as we came to a passage in which St. John says that Jesus Christ is a son in the *spirit*, not in the flesh of God. Her idea of Islam, which she had learned from Christian missionaries, was that Muslims have such a low opinion of Christianity that we think God got married. Well, all these arguments are at a supremely low level. Each religion is explained by great saints, who know the meanings of every line in revelation. I'll always love Christianity, the Bible, and especially the Book of John; but I'm a Muslim for many reasons.

Fast decisions

I wanted to leave Pakistan straightaway, make the Umra and learn more Arabic in Saudi Arabia, where I had a "pen pal"—Ahmed Farid, who lived in Medina and would help me. So, fast as the wind, I gave away most of what I had—including a large new refrigerator. In one corner I had moved furniture and tons of things for Sarvar, and in another corner were things for Ali. Zebu was home, very ill; and the man who used to be the "gatekeeper" had left.

It seemed Ali was used to this sort of thing, and I was surprised: He looked at the corner full of wonderful things for his brother-in-law, Sarvar, and said, "I'll take care of this!" I said, "No, you won't; all those things are for Sarvar."

Then, he disputed over my father's electric razor—saying it had been promised to him by my father; but no, not at all: My father thought he'd live for years more. I'd promised the best thing to Sarvar—a big fridge; but then Sarvar took me aside into the kitchen and tried to tell me something. It took ages; but I finally understood: Ali had threatened to kill him if I gave the fridge to him rather than to Ali! (Later I learned that Ali had two refrigerators, too)! I fired Ali on the spot, and told him that I was filing a Protective Order

against him, with the Police: He could not return to that house. Incidents were swimming around in my head: I remembered his fighting with a Suzuki driver, who charged us one extra rupee, because I wanted to sit up front. At the time, I hadn't understood; but a policeman had to come and pull Ali away! He was a perfect employee but jealous, greedy and stingy beyond belief... and I didn't have time to mix oil and water!

It was proving complicated for Ahmed Farid to get me into Saudi Arabia, because I had no *mahram* (man protector), a legal requirement for living in that country. Well, Princess Reem had told me to call her if I ever needed anything at all, so I did. She tried, but said it was impossible. I was stranded; but I sure didn't want to keep that big house and servants for myself alone, so I was mulling things over. Meanwhile Sarvar was spending his nights in the house, sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Why the floor, I forget; but he wouldn't leave me unprotected, alone in that house. He lived up high in a mud house on a mountain. Well not a mud house, it was called a *mithi* house, made of a clay-like mud which is very common for houses of the poor there.

Well one day Sarvar thought he would impress me and give me a good time, so he took me to visit some people who were well-educated, but lived a long way from my house, where one of his sons was a servant. So we drove interminably and then sat visiting aimlessly with that family. The man was being kept alive with daily dialysis, paid for by I don't know who; but that kind of medicine is tremendously expensive, and I wondered if he was afraid to die and why. It was a wealthy family, not of foreigners, and they had pretty much adopted Sarvar's son, who slept in the same bed with one of their sons. They called him their son, sent him to school, and drew him in close, obviously proud of their own charity. Well I would have admired that too; but I kept talking to those people and as best I could, I was trying to figure out whether I liked them or not: I wasn't sure. Sarvar didn't know enough English to really communicate with me. I just liked him by instinct.

It turned out that Sarvar's son didn't earn enough money working there to ever go home and see his parents and brothers and sisters. That family *acted* as if they had adopted him; but he was actually a well-kept slave. It was a hypocritical situation in which they were using quite a strong, talented, bright and attractive young man as a servant and paying him practically nothing. He looked much more virtuous and enterprising than their own boy; so I told Sarvar in so many words that I didn't like those people at all. We left—not insulting them, but politely leaving. I wanted nothing to do with that kind of wealthy people, who got extremely good deals with the most talented of poor people's children. I'd see that repeatedly.

Another time, Sarvar took me up to his house and I spent the night there. That was so interesting! It was way high up on a mountain, and his little house was made of mithi (clay-like mud). That's actually not such a bad building

material; it just requires the men of the house to be enterprising, because after many rains it needs repairing. His house was impeccably neat and well-maintained, with a great big tree, in the middle of the only room, holding the roof up. The ceiling was attractively made with the insides of sacks of flour, so there wasn't any writing, saying "flour" on it. It was strong, coarse cloth, each piece neatly sewn to the others. There weren't any windows, and it's hard to make windows in a simple mithi house without all kinds of tools. They had my refrigerator in there—looking like a white elephant. And they had one double bed. I'd forgotten if it came from my house or where, and they had what's called a four legs (*charpai*); and I don't know where the others slept; but they put me in that huge bed. It was a sweet, hospitable and funny situation: They had twelve children, plus the father and a mother, and there was this enormous bed with only me in it. I'd tried to figure something else out; but they wouldn't accept any other solution. Don't ask me where everyone else slept.

A child woke me up at 4am to pray *fajr*, and then we all went outside. There was a fire, already burning in the front yard, and we all roasted horse corn (the only kind there is there). That was brushed with a spicy, melted butter, and we had eggs too. It was a delicious breakfast! I entertained the children, telling them the story about the day of my mystical vision, when I had seen a parakeet in a tree, then several parakeets, and then trees full of kissing parakeets. One of the little girls knew English, so she translated. She was sensitive too, so she wept when I told that story. Sarvar has ever remained a good note, a lovely memory in my life in Pakistan—albeit he had a little fault of taking a bit of some drug—only on payday. I don't know how bad it was or how bad it had been or what; but I realized that he made his own cigarettes, and when he got paid he asked if he could go to town. He would come home with something he put in those cigarettes. I never mentioned it, and it was never bad enough so that I had to say or do anything, thank goodness.

After a while, I went to the bank to collect my pension, as usual; and Ali knew exactly what day I would be there, because his cousin, a banker, knew each month's exact day of my pension's arrival. He'd been fired; but there he was, when I walked in. I nodded to him grumpily, and went to the cashier's window, where his cousin asked me to have mercy on Ali, as he still hadn't been able to find a job. That's a terrible problem with the poor: If anything happens, or an employer lays down the law, they are helpless. So I turned around and gave Ali his full, usual salary, trying to say something nice; but I was still a bit mad. Once he had saved the life of a miserable-looking, jealous, wild kitten I'd tried to adopt, so I told him this big salary was his reward; but I forgave him for everything later.

That fellow, who was such a good employee, did not have a good character though: He admitted no fault—only blaming me for taking him seriously. But I had investigated: He was dead serious in that threat—not that he would

have killed Sarvar; but he was nasty enough to make threats and do or say obnoxious things like that—and more than once. Anyway, I did write him a first class recommendation, warned him about his greed, and paid him till he got a perfect job.

A note in passing: We *had* gone to court: Me, Ali and Sarvar, because I had filed a complaint. When I walked up to the Courthouse, there was Ali sitting outside. He saw me and said, "What have you done?" As if I had committed a crime by reporting this to the police! That made me more furious. That's been a typical theme in my life: People blame the one who talks—the one who was trying to be fair, and they don't blame the one who was unjust! Well in the trial or whatever you call it, the supervisor of police, who knew me and was quite nice in trying to protect me, told me that none of those people were worth my worrying about. But I really didn't agree. I loved all my servants and forgave them (after stewing a while). Ali's greed is a type of fault that the poor get when they are squeezed to death. Pakistan is a country in which money is foremost in everybody's minds, because it's so very hard to survive.

There was a whole other class of people who were trying hard to be in charge of me and my affairs so they would be paid a percentage for taking care of my money; but I wasn't well-to-do at all. I only had what's considered a poverty living in the United States; but *there* I was told that my income was equal to that of a bank president!

While all these things were going on, I was supporting my former servant, Zebu, who had ten children; but three were already married, and I didn't even know any of her children at first. Once I spent a night at her house, and that was a much poorer house, with no competent man like Sarvar to maintain things; except that they had chickens, a cute pet dog, and a goat. Believe it or not, it was a happy, healthy and attractive family!

Now Zebu's house looked like less than a shack; and as a woman, Zebu was a beauty; but even as servants go, she was hardly among the best. Underneath, she was a great, heroic woman, whose full name, Zebu n-Nisa' means "the splendor and beauty among women." Her eight daughters were all beautiful, and her two sons were handsome. Maybe their beauty helped: All the girls married above their social status at birth, except one, Qadri, the one I'd love as if she'd come out of a pure white cloud!

Again, at Zebu's so-called house, I was given the only bed in the room; but it was only a straw cot, called a charpai (that means "four legs"). While I was falling asleep, I noticed some big lump of cloth on the crude floor; but I thought nothing of it, until opening my eyes the next morning: There were seven pairs of feet sticking out from under there! It was a cover; but those children kept warm mostly by being together—and that was their story for life! When Zebu finally died, they all went up to an old, abandoned cabin on a mountain, with one cover. There they lived together again, trying to cure

their hearts. She was a good woman and a wonderful mother. We all knew she could lie to some rich people—not meanly, not in the usual way, but out of desperation due to poverty. When she died, her children all forgot her faults and so did I.

Zebu and I talked like Sarvar and I: Catastrophically—with hands, pictures and misunderstandings; but nothing matters when the "talkers" are of goodwill. Somehow, Zebu asked me if I'd ever had children. "No." No brothers, no sisters, no living aunts or uncles. My father was my last living relative aside from cousins, and they did not like Islam. After he died, I never heard from them again.

Well, Zebu said I could have her children. Now I think she was half serious—being afraid she'd die soon, and hoping I'd take good care of them. The poor will give their children away like that, in desperation; and that could presumably work out fairly well. To reassure her, but also being half serious, I said, "No; but we will share them;" and I kept taking money to her until she died.

One day, when she was lying down on her sick bed (She had a weak heart) her daughters started playing music and dancing. Then they picked her up and held her up close to them; but after a while, she asked to be put back down. She said the Shahadah and passed away! Zebu had lived for ten years after becoming deathly ill. Then she died of happiness!

Up a bumpy road into the unknown

Finally, the day came. It had become certain that I could not live in Saudi Arabia (which was nothing like what it is now) and I had nowhere to go! One of Zebu's married daughters lived in a little mountain village, and her/my/our, oldest son told me that I was invited to go up and live there forever. That daughter lived with her husband and two children, in the house of her in-laws. Her father-in-law was the Imam of Swachamina Village, and he was wealthy. I'd have my own room and bath, and everything I could possibly want. Since I was a foreign, Muslim woman, stranded in a foreign land, it would bring a great blessing to the house, if the family would be hospitable towards me.

So Sarvar put all I hadn't given away into his old truck, and up a mountain we went. On my lap was the suitcase I'd brought from the US: It was a bit open so enough air could get in, because Sweetie Pie, my lovely mother cat, was in there, with her three kittens. No one yet realized that if you get me, you get my cat! The road was impossibly bumpy: I could hardly stay on my seat; and later I'd find out that taxis refuse to go up there. You live in Swachamina Village—you walk there. From below, you walk up on that road, or from above, a Suzuki would take you to the top of a mountain. From there, you'd have to wind your way down to Swachamina. I would do that sometimes: That's how I got stuck with a terrorist Suzuki driver!

Mummy and me

Sarvar's truck was by the gate, and in I went. An older lady, but younger than me, took me into my new room, and she began to talk. I'd studied Urdu, but was appalled: In maybe 20 minutes, I didn't understand a single word she said. But somehow, I managed to tell her that I didn't like the furniture, and had my own in Sarvar's truck. She made a gesture with her arm, and three strong young men arrived to move the furniture into some storage place. Then I had to open that suitcase and introduce Sweetie Pie and her family.

That woman, who I still call "Mummy," did not know Urdu, and had been speaking Henko to me! I'd never heard of that; but I soon found out that many women in my village spoke nothing else. Many were illiterate too. Now concerning my suitcase, it would take a while for me to understand those people; but they had no concept of "pets," that were fed for their charm. Children up there played with little goats, chickens and ducks—maybe a newborn lamb. There was no such thing as cat food, so I bought chicken legs, and Sweetie Pie would pull on one end, while a kitten would be on the other. And no cat *ever* got sick: They couldn't afford it; and they'd relish bread dipped in cayenne pepper sauce.

Before dinner, my beautiful and competent, but illiterate daughter, came in to explain some major details: That night I began to understand. She only told me half; but I'd see the other half with my own eyes, that evening. I was a guest, supposedly forever, in the house of the village Imam, who was called "Abu ji" by practically everyone. That means "honorable father," and he was honored by all for his extreme piety. My calling his wife "Mummy" was actually a good idea: All relationships are familial, and mothers are greatly honored. Well, next came the subject of their being rich, my "having everything" there, and my being invited due to charity. When the time came for supper, my daughter Qadri, took me upstairs. Sweetie Pie and company followed us up and sat politely outside the kitchen door.

On that roof was a crude kitchen made of mithi. In it, was a fireplace, made of more mithi, and that then had a mithi grill. Since there were no chairs, nor any room for furniture, we all sat on the floor around the fire—not that we could have stood up: The ceiling was low and the top half of the room was full of smoke. Anyone who stood up would start to cry from smoke. Qadri fixed the dinner: A thick lentil paste, *highly* spiced, which we dipped "roti" in. That was a crude, but delicious, coarse bread made in front of us on that grill, with scraps getting thrown outside for my cat family.

After dinner, Qadri washed the dishes in cold water, outside on the open roof. The "soap" was ashes from the fire! I got the idea: My new family was as poor as a church mouse; those people needed me, and Qadri was pretty much a slave—serving her mother and father-in-law, who had four, as yet unmarried but grown children. Qadri also had her own husband, Jamal, and their two

little girls to take care of. No one had a job except her husband, who earned little because he wasn't well-educated. There seemed to be a hope for that family: Me! I didn't mind, but was distressed over all the work Qadri had to do.

I was seeing a little corner of old, traditional Islam—one of the few corners left in the world. Although I was delighted to be away from both the Tariqah, and ISNA, I was always moving from one error into another. In Swachamina Village, I'd see some lovely Islamic values, and I'd meet a few virtuous souls; but I'd also find degenerating Islamic institutions, plus new purely Pakistani customs which had nothing whatsoever to do with Islam.

The main problem was an awful idea, which was a sheer Pakistani invention: It was the custom that the oldest daughter-in-law in a house, would have to serve everyone else. I'd see Qadri with huge piles of laundry and ironing, housework, cooking and the washing of dishes... all on her head, when she had two sisters-in-law, who only helped a little. Finally, although I'd intended to build a small house for myself alone, I ended up building a two-storey house, so she and her family could get away from her parents-in-law. My part was like a hermitage on the roof. Their part was like Grand Central Station; but we called it a "Pir Sahib's house." That's the crowded home of a religious authority, called a Pir Sahib.

We lived there together happily, but with countless troubles and adventures, until I left Pakistan, 13 years after going there to retire with my father. While I was there, Afghani fanatics tried to take over parts of Pakistan near its border with Afghanistan. One beautiful old city, Peshawar, which was only a four-hour drive from us, was bombed so often that it's in ruins today; and another city, Swat, was conquered and occupied. Its inhabitants, who had lived in their family houses, were moved into tents, set up by the Pakistani Government. Once I'd considered living in Swat!

Meanwhile, back in the Tariqah…

I didn't know it, but Sayyidah Latifah had heard that I was living in Pakistan, and in the province that isn't too far from Afghanistan. Somehow, the idea developed that I must be associated with the fanatic Taliban of Afghanistan, so instructions were that no one should write to me—as if anyone would anyway.

But there was more: When I was living with Sidi Abdul Ali, in our house in Bloomington, I kept getting expensive-looking fundraising documents from Harvard University. Those filled up our mail box; but the main problem was that I was annoyed to see them spend so much money on fundraising. So I wrote to Harvard, asking to be taken off the mailing list, as I would not be contributing and I didn't like to see money wasted on raising money from a dry well. After I'd written several times to no avail, a day came when I felt as

if I had a spiritual death in the Tariqah—due to I forget what; but there were plenty of causes. Still annoyed by all those expensive booklets arriving from Harvard, I sent a note: "Maude Murray died on such a date." No more mail came!

Well after I left the center of the Tariqah, someone called Harvard to get my address. Harvard said I had died; but everyone knew I was alive. So they arrived at a conclusion: Sayyidah Aminah has staged her own death to plan for her future disparition!

Alone with a terrorist on a mountain top

For years, the road up to Swachamina Village was so bumpy that hardly anyone would drive up there; so one had to walk on that road or come and go from the top of the mountain. Sometimes I'd take a Suzuki up, and get off on the top. Then there was a path from the top of the mountain leading down to our village. But one day, I was alone in a Suzuki, and as usual, I was sitting up front next to the driver. In the back, there was only one man, a friend of the driver's. Well I was looking around and trying to talk to this man, when I noticed that he had all kinds of stickers of tanks, guns and war things on his windshield. I could read the Arabic perfectly: He belonged to a fanatic, un-Islamic, movement that was against non-Muslims. I managed to ask him in Urdu if he was against Americans and he said "Yes." I managed to tell him "I am a Muslim, are you against me?" And he said, "No." So I relaxed; but that man was precisely what one would call a terrorist. In thirteen years, I never had an encounter with anyone like that except that one time when I was alone on the top of a mountain. According to real Islam, Christians and Jews are welcome to live in Muslim countries and they are free to practise their own religions, while being protected from invaders.

That man could easily have killed me and left me in that isolated place, if he had decided I wasn't really a Muslim or something. Actually, he was nice enough with me; but I was scared to death and at that time anyway, in the US, one was hearing all about terrorism in Pakistan. We never heard of it where I lived except that one time in thirteen years. As to why diabolic movements exist, and where, that's explained by many, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr has explained these anomalies in several of his books, which are in the Bibliography.

The day of the one potato

Each month when my two pension payments arrived, Jamal would get my cash at the bank (with a power of attorney or something) and my daughter, Qadri, would bring the money upstairs. I'd not count it much, but divide it in

rough piles: "This is for gas and electricity; this is for food; here's your pension; here's Papa's, and this is mine."

One month, she didn't tell me (so as not to make me worry) but she'd had to spend the food money to repair our water tank. In the whole house, there was one potato, and there were nine of us: By then she and Jamal had six children. She had been praying about our predicament, but hadn't said a word.

Everyone in the village was poor; but because of me, we were by far the most wealthy. Sharing, loaning and giving were all decidedly common; but our position was delicate diplomatically, as I was considered a rich American—albeit I had so many obligations that we were always as empty-handed as everyone else by the month's end; but this was only the middle of the month! She was trusting in God, and she had done that her whole life.

Now that was still a rare, traditional Muslim village. We had a wall around our house and a good strong door leading into our yard. No man was allowed to enter the private area of another man's space, where his wife and children lived. But that day, a man walked in through our garden's gate, and came right up to knock on our front door. Although surprised, Qadri let him in, as he asked for me, and she'd become used to having an American mother, who had acquaintances among foreigners.

He told us that he worked in the Township Office, on the other side of our mountain, and he happened to know a Pakistani man, who had been my friend and colleague at The Islamic Society of North America. That friend of his and mine, had sent me a present of $200 by computer, so our visitor had changed that to Pakistani rupees, and he handed me a big brown envelope, full of money! It was ample for our household expenses till the month's end, and even paid what we still owed for the water tank repair! I just handed it to Qadri—remarking that my colleagues thought I was well-to-do in Pakistan. I'd written and told them how I'd even been able to adopt a family of ten! So I think God replied to my daughter's trust in Him; as for me, I'd had no idea that we only had that one potato!

The day of the hardboiled egg

I became extremely irritable after a while, and thought I was depressed, so I saw a psychiatrist, who got nowhere after his trying umpteen medicines on me. In desperation, he tried some unusual medicine; and as usual, I read the little piece of paper that came in the box. Having met all kinds of personality disorders, I'd read a stack of books; and I like to know everything about people, so I'd read about many kinds of psychological and psychiatric problems, as well as physical causes of mood changes. Still, I was surprised by some things on that paper.

Feeling a bit better with the minimum dose of that remedy, I was just going along with life, when I suddenly got a really bad flu. Qadri and I went to the local doctor, who charges about one dollar per visit: He has a private practice on his off days of working in a well-paid job, and he practises to help the poorer people; not that he earns anything. Well, all things considered, I had to stop taking that special medicine and treat the flu. (Incidentally, that doctor was of a racial type most people never see: He was a "Pathan." Those are strikingly taller and stronger than most—seeming to have the body and strength of two. They come from a mountainous region in Afghanistan, and look like giants until one gets used to them).

The next morning, I woke up furious! Qadri had left a hardboiled egg by my bed for several days. I had no idea it would keep fresh fine... and anyway, I was *mad!* I took that egg and threw it downstairs onto her porch. As usual, she came up so nicely, saying, with good humor, "It's so nice to have a mother to get mad at me before tea in the morning! What's the matter, Mama ji?" I gave her a piece of my mind, and then threw some Scotch tape against the wall! Then, I realized that I was not in a normal state; and I was guessing why: I'd read the paper that came with that medicine! "Qadri," I said, "I've never been furious like this in my life: I think I know why. It's because Dr. Qazi stopped that medicine all of a sudden, and this is a reaction. I'm going to take it again and if I'm better in two hours, we're going to his office." (I never went anywhere without her: Praise the Lord, she was my beloved daughter, friend, helper, companion and translator. What else is there?)

We sat in Dr. Qazi's office, telling him about that hardboiled egg and the Scotch tape. Then I asked, "Do I have bipolar disorder?"

He replied, "You have bipolar disorder."

"Are you sure?!"

"I am sure!"

"Are you *positive*?"

"I am *positive!*"

I'd known it anyway; but oh dear! I wanted to get it straight from the horse's mouth. Then I realized that it had started 20 years earlier when I was under too much pressure. I had been abnormally angry at times, too energetic at others, then dead tired.

That malady is not an illness of the soul—rather it comes from a physical fault in the brain, which causes mood exaggerations. No one has decided exactly what causes it, but it's usually attributed to an electro-chemical imbalance—whatever that is. Thank goodness, I have a very slight case of it, because it can ruin one's life, especially if one doesn't know one has it. I can tell when it's bothering me now, and I can take a low dose of a medicine also used for epilepsy. The disorder, which is not a disease, often first manifests in periods of extreme stress: That had happened when I was leaving the so-called "Tariqah;"

but I hadn't recognized it then, and got embarrassed. God let me be tried from all sides, and from inside too!

I know people; and some are of ill-will. They will try to discredit me and maybe God too, by saying that I'm hyper-emotional. An emotional person is *dominated* by his feelings: He does not throw a hardboiled egg, and soon conclude that something is wrong with him. And no matter how much emotion is added or subtracted, *fervor* is an entirely different phenomenon. In deepest reality, there is no way one can be *too* fervent, or call it passionate, about God—or say the Truth, or the Absolutely Real. Our feelings, hearts, minds and spirits are not large enough to fathom the greatness of any great spiritual reality. So no matter how exaggerated one's feelings may be, one cannot be equal to the task of loving God—except through grace.

A great many people have this disorder, and God knows best; but it seems to be one of the new diseases. There are many—all unheard of a thousand years ago. Around the time of Muhammad, say in 500 and 600 AD, people only died of wounds or the plague—or occasionally from colds or flus. The reason for that degeneration could be our less healthy way of living: That's what most people think; but it could also be the result of spiritual and moral degeneration.

Dear diary, at the end of my own life (but for some this comes only in the Next World) I see that everything that happened to me—both good and bad, served for good! This is in the Bible, Romans 8:28; but I *realize* it: "For those who love God, all things work together unto good..." Bipolar disorder can be a tremendous help! It gives energy, when others are fading away, exhausted! And several very funny people in my life, actually did keep me young longer! My father, Malik and Altaf, none of whom really understood the complexities of a spiritual path... they all made me younger and stronger too. Kind words and smiles, little gifts... every single thing serves for good! Now *you*: Maybe you've had a miserable life, no health, no humor, no adventures like mine: That will not matter if you are DIPPED ONCE INTO HEAVEN! See here a hadith:

"Anas b. Malik reported that Allah's Messenger said that one amongst the denizens of Hell who had led a life of ease and plenty amongst the people of the world would be made to dip in Fire only once on the Day of Resurrection and then it would be said to him: 'O, son of Adam, did you find any comfort, did you happen to get any material blessing?' He would say: 'By Allah, no, my Lord.' And then that person from amongst the persons of the world be brought who had led the most miserable life (in the world) from amongst the inmates of Paradise. and he would be made to dip once in Paradise and it would be said to him: 'O, son of Adam, did you face any hardship? Or had any distress fallen to your lot?' And he would say: 'By Allah, no, O my Lord, never did I face any hardship or experience any distress.'"

9/11

After some years in Swachamina Village, the poverty became too much for me: Everything looked too hard, so I was thinking about moving back to the States. My Pakistani brother, Shahid, was living there and encouraged me greatly. He told me that my two guesthouses were still there; there was linen in the closets: Everything and everybody was encouraging me, and pleading with me to come back to a perfect situation.

So I arrived at the airport in Chicago, and there he was with his children, waving balloons that said: "Welcome home;" but he didn't have the key to my beloved Ansar House, so I'd stay at his place overnight. That became weeks; but finally, off we went to my dream house! In front of it was a "No trespassing" sign, and it was collapsing. The kitchen cupboards had been ripped out and stolen. A beautifully framed picture of the whole Quran was mildewing, in a pile of rotting wood... and my blood curdled!

Not only that! My brother wouldn't even let me telephone my daughter on his phone; and many Muslims would only talk to people in their home countries, outside their houses! I could not believe that there had been such a change—in fact I *refused* to believe them until they had told me many stories. After 9/11, so much prejudice against Islam grew, that even the FBI had sent a spy to The Islamic Society of North America. After pretending to be converted to Islam, that spy organized groups of young Muslim boys and tried to get them to say untrue things about what "jihad" means in Islam.

There were endless complications in my every move; and I was about to collapse in tears from worrying about Qadri, who had no idea where or how I was. But just when I'd reached my limit, Shahid took me to see a friend of his. That man had such a lovely sense of humor, that I felt better just being with him. He was also not afraid of anybody and handed me his phone! Soon I got my feet back under me. When I'd left the US for Pakistan in 2000, I was feeling perfectly at home as a Muslim in America. After 9/11, I did not want to live there anymore. Some horrible *people* had willed to murder countless others; but the *religion* of Islam was blamed.

There was another thing though: Most of my friends now had fine houses, all in the same area, built around an artificial lake. The roads and sidewalks were so covered with concrete that the general impression was too "civilized" in the wrong way to me—lacking in real "naturalness." I need virgin nature, animals—a way of living which is found in countless places in the US; but not accessible to me.

Every move was full of obstacles, but I finally arrived back at our house in Swachamina. The double doors were open downstairs—as usual; but birds were flying in and out of the living room! Above a bedroom door, was a little ledge; and carefully constructed on that ledge was a birdnest! Qadri told me that the mother bird slept on her chicks to keep them warm at night. The male

slept on a ceiling fan; but all day they were both coming and going to feed their chicks! I laughed, and was so happy to be back in a place where nature was a natural part of my life, that I said, "I'll praise the Lord, and never leave here again!"

The night I left the cosmos

I had an old tomcat, who was named Panda, because he looked like a panda bear. Although he was old, and deaf, he was brave, and quite capable of defending himself—but not when he was asleep. Now on the night in question, our house was not yet finished. Well, it never was finished; but in those days, I had no windows in my part, upstairs on the roof. Birds flew right through, and anything could come in when it wanted to.

Well one night, I was asleep, with Panda beside me, when I heard the ferocious, really ominous-sounding, threats of another tomcat. He was in my room, and headed for Panda! Furious, I whisked the cover off my bed and lunged at him, shouting threats, and using that duvet like a broom, I was going to shoo the invader out and away, off the roof.

Indeed, off he went, into the night and onto the ground below; but alack and alas, off I went too! For the only time in my life, I had a moment of ecstasy, due to flying free, between the roof... and, oh dear! A pile of randomly stacked-up bricks, waiting to be used in building some last part of our house, on the ground below!

I yelled loudly, for help, although I was right outside my daughter's bedroom. Soon, there she was, with her husband, Jamal, beside her. He was weeping, and asked her, amazed: "Why didn't she come down the usual way?" (Everyone looked to my daughter, even for information. In those days we had a ladder to my part of our house. What he meant was, "Why didn't she come down the ladder, as usual")?

Abu-ji, Jamal's father—who was pretty old like me—came running, carrying a charpai. Those are made of a wooden frame and four legs, with a woven-rope top, which is not so bad to sleep on. Then came "our" cousin, from the next town too (whoever was their cousin was mine). He owned a highly decorated kind of Pakistani "taxi," into which I was loaded from the back, on that charpai, which was being used as a stretcher. Although I guess I was in pain, I've forgotten that. All I remember is that I was saying the Shahadah, with every breath, and out loud. I always talk when I'm in trouble; but the amazing thing wasn't me: Inside that taxi-like thing, was my whole family! I vaguely remember seeing Mummy in the dark; but everyone was there, because in a Pakistani family, when you're in trouble, everyone is there.

Another time, when I went to Pakistan on a visit (to meet orphans, before moving there) I was staying with my brother's family in Lahore. Ignoring all

warnings, I was drinking unboiled water, until suddenly I got a raging case of amoebic dysentery. Everything was going down, out of me, and up too! But the whole family decided I needed company. Children and their parents poured into my room, and they were taking photographs of the children lined up on my big bed. I supposedly had a private room and bath, while my brother and his wife slept under a cover on the floor somewhere. So there I was, sick as could be, but they all thought it was time for a party! The youngest of the orphans I planned to adopt, was there too, visiting. She thought our bed was a playground. It was all so charming, warm and funny, that I accepted it happily.

Well, when we all got to the hospital the night I fell off the roof, I had one of my arms around Jamal's shoulder and the other around Qadri's. Finally "we" got what was left of me onto an examining room table. A doctor told them in Henko that I'd be fine someday; but for a month I must be kept immobile, and turned over every half hour. So back home we all went, with some pills and papers. Oh those pills! I haven't much memory of that month, because (I saw on the leaflet later) those pills contained some kind of opium! I hardly noticed a thing, feeling fine all month; but Qadri sure had a hard time. In addition to her many children, she had her mother to turn over and feed—with a baby bottle. Honestly, I hardly remember any pain or trouble, but my daughter told me everything later.

Where babies come from

No one in the village fully trusted me for a long time—except my ever precious daughter, and her children, who had no idea I was a foreigner. One day, one of her daughters asked her: "Who is your mother?"

She said, "Bay bay ji" (That's me, and it means "the honorable oldest lady in the house").

But at the time, Zebu was still alive, so the little girl asked, "Who is Nanno?"

"She's my mother too," said Qadri.

No more questions were asked, and all her children then knew she had two mothers!

They also believed that their parents bought babies at the bazaar. When, after seven girls, Qadri had a boy, one daughter asked her how that had happened? She dutifully explained that there had been a good little boy available that day, so they brought him home. He was named Muhammad Yusuf, and is their eighth and last child. I have over 25 grandchildren from my other adopted sons and daughters: I haven't counted them lately!

A tale of two sisters

Zebu didn't die until ten years after we had decided to "share" her children. Then her ten children, were desolate. Although she had died of heart failure—actually caused by happiness—her children, in-laws and grandchildren were inconsolable. It was a phenomenally close and loving family, and my heart had been "stolen" for good!

One night, her eight daughters took candles and incense to her grave, and prayed for her there. Then after some days, we heard that one of them had had a dream: Their mother was flying upwards in the sky, carrying a basket that was overflowing with flowers. She told her daughter: "I am perfectly happy where I am, and lack nothing. When all of you, my daughters, prayed by my grave, I was full of joy!"

Then a week or so passed, and we didn't have phones then. I heard that a different daughter, who lived at some distance from the first one (so she hadn't heard that dream) also had had a dream of their mother. It was almost exactly the same dream, and the same idea was in almost the same words! Those two daughters had never liked one another much: one was a bit dry and factual, the other poetic. But after having the same dream, they became close friends!

Disgraced in front of an Afghani child

Once I was walking home, winding my way, up the bumpy road on our little mountain. As usual, children gathered around me, curious, because I'm so white, and I wore a perfect head covering when I went out. That day they were all boys, and they started asking me questions in Urdu. Well, my Urdu is pretty limited; but they seemed to sense that. I understood one of them, who asked me, "What is your noble name?"

"Aminah," I said (That's my Muslim name).

I'd just learned from that little boy, how to ask someone his name, so I said, "What is *your* noble name?"

Then we made the rounds—learning one another's names. But I saw one little boy, who looked quite different from the others, so I asked him: "What is the name of your noble country?"

"Afghanistan," he replied.

Aha! I thought. He did look different, and I'd guessed. So I thought they'd all like to know where I was from, and so I volunteered, "The name of my noble country is Amreeka."

Oh dear: They all started laughing and jeering, getting boisterous! One of them said that America was *not* a noble country! And they were getting rowdy, while I was becoming slightly alarmed. That was a time when their news was full of the United States "interfering" in Afghanistan; but I had no idea how

that was regarded by adults in other countries—much less children. Nearby was the gate of a house whose people I knew a little bit. You see, if you're adopted into a Pakistani family, you've been adopted by all their countless relatives. In that house, lived Nasreen, the sister of someone in my family: So I ducked into the yard behind the gate—being known and accepted there. Somehow, I managed to tell Nasreen that I was a little alarmed, and she had a good teenage son, who walked me home.

I never forgot that little incident, because it showed how differently a country was seen from the exact other side of the planet. Another time, I missed a plane in London, and had to spend a night in a hotel there. Bored, I turned on the TV. There was the British Parliament, debating I forget about what; *but the convincing point of view* wasn't at all what I was used to in the US. And when it's night in the US, it's morning in India! I learn a lot from these things! But take it or leave it: There's more than one side to the world, *and* to a story!

Three loving friends

Before moving to Pakistan I had met Maryam Jameelah by mail and Zeba (Elizabeth) Siddiqui at a convention of The Islamic Society. They were both well-known writers who converted to Islam about the same time I did; and the three of us had many views in common. Maryam Jameelah had been raised as a Jew in New York City. She was brilliant and had simply kept reading everything she could get her hands on, until she found Islam. Then she had corresponded with Maulana Maududi, a well-known Pakistani scholar, and her letters to and from him have been published and are quite famous. Only now do I hear that he is sometimes considered one of the "forefathers" of Islamic extremism; but that didn't exist back then. For her he was a scholar.

When she was in her mid-twenties, Maulana Maududi invited her to come to Pakistan and live in his household with his wife and family. She accepted, and wrote a book about her life there, called *At Home in Pakistan*. I wrote to her as long as she lived, as well as to Elizabeth Siddiqui, who wrote under the pseudonyms of Suzanne Haneef, and Marianne Kazi. As Marianne Kazi, she wrote the book *Adhan over Anatolia* which tells about why she became a Muslim: She had been traveling in Turkey, when she heard the call to prayer, called the "Adhan." The beauty convinced her that Islam must be a true religion, so she began to learn about it. Actually, her reaction was an illustration of a dictum of the great Greek philosopher, Plato. He said, "Beauty is the splendor of the true," and every revelation has produced a culture. Some objects in those cultures are sufficiently beautiful to be an indication that the Truth has caused the beauty. This is a known principle in other religions too: One could become a Christian due to the beauty of the Sainte Chapelle, or Nôtre Dame Cathedral.

Well, when I moved to Pakistan, it turned out that I was living not too far from Maryam Jameelah; and of course I thought of moving heaven and earth to try and visit her, because we had become best friends by mail. Her books had made a great impression upon many, because she was so very intelligent; but also she was brought up as a Jew, only to become a very traditional Muslim. To my astonishment, our mutual friend Zeba told me: "No, don't go and see her, because she's insane!" Then she explained that Maryam Jameelah was a dear and brilliant woman, but actually insane. That was why, in her book, *At Home in Pakistan*, she describes how Maulana Maududi had her put in a mental institution. She felt betrayed, and saw no way out. However, Maulana Maududi sent a man there to visit her. He came again and again, bringing sweets. Finally, he asked her to marry him, and managed to get her out of there. He was Muhammad Yusuf Khan, a good man and a publisher, who would print nearly all her books. He took care of her and loved her as she loved him for the rest of her life. He was also the publisher for the Jamaat-e-Islami. Although she didn't agree with him about that, they agreed upon everything else. She adored him lifelong and did her best to be a loving wife and mother.

But everyone who had ever seen her found it painfully difficult to deal with her. She could hardly talk, and was quite disheveled. She couldn't take care of herself well, and how she managed her whole life, goodness knows. She had medicines, which helped, and she conformed to Islam perfectly; but everyone who actually saw her realized that something was very wrong. Knowing her was a lesson for me, and even in only writing to her, every once in a while she would get extremely upset by a sentence or some little thing that I'd said or hadn't, and she'd stop talking to me. Then Zeba would have to step in and intervene, while I did the same for Zeba. It was a bumpy, but lovely friendship. We all three loved one another. Maryam Jameelah lived out her life with intelligence and virtue, in spite of a handicap that was hard to live with. I consider her a brave woman; and as for her handicap, it seems no more important than a mosquito! That was a kind of lesson I learned many times. I hope you learn it too.

Osama bin Laden

A few years before I left, the people in our village heard that the United States had killed Osama bin Laden, right below our village in Abbottabad. The house he was found in, was blown up, we were told... and scraps of that house fell quite near where several of my (by then grown-up) children were living.

No one around me believed the Americans had killed him. In fact most Pakistanis were laughing—saying that this was another stunt: He had died in the high mountains of Afghanistan, ten years earlier, of tuberculosis! As Shakespeare said, "There is reason in his madness." The majority were ignorant, and

they had a point of view colored by experience: Foreign governments were deceptive—not the people, but the governments. Too many things had happened, not only there, but around the world: Wealthy countries were in the poorer countries, and whether that presence was really for good or for bad, the majority didn't like it, rightly or wrongly.

From several things that happened there, I realized that events look different depending upon where one is. I myself *will* to be totally out of everything political, and not to say who is right. One thing is clear, and I told you about this earlier: A mountain looks different depending upon where you are. Only when you are on the top, can you see all the paths. The myth of the elephant has a similar meaning. Only the highest or total reality of events has Truth: Points of view are all subject to prejudice and reactions.

A hermit's cave

Adventures were actually few and far between: I spent most of my time alone in an apartment on the roof (better than my dear jail cell)! Since I had designed our house, I had few, but very large rooms, and windows galore! There were healthy, climbing vines in my living room, and I usually had a cat—albeit Panda died of old age, and two I'd loved went off on the mountain to mate, and never came back. There were no veterinarians, and cats that aren't neutered can be hard to domesticate: When they have a choice, they'll give up a good home for freedom. Once I found a gorgeous, white, longhaired Persian male, with blue eyes, for sale. Everyone in town loved him, and he loved living there—visiting every house and making himself at home on the most comfortable places. He was handsome (and I was the one who fed him) so no one had the usual prejudice about having a useless animal around. But alas, one day he was stolen, and surely sold. That's a typical problem in poor countries. When poverty goes beyond a reasonable level, there's so much crime that if one loves something, one has to keep it tied down.

Most of the time I was reading, praying and reflecting—always trying to understand the contradictions around Frithjof Schuon. Around me were a least a hundred volumes of absolutely sure books—no books about anyone's opinions or interpretations—only the six great collections of ahadith, each collection consisting of seven to ten volumes; plus many biographies of Muhammad, and famous ancient texts—all filled with notes. And I was making an index to my Quran too; but in a crude "handmade" way: It hadn't occurred to me that many concordances must exist.

I saw a perfect system for a harmonious, God-tending society, in the Sunnah; and all my marks were by passages which proved that God Himself, and the Prophet, had said everything that needed to be said forever. No additions or changes were needed, and "the Shaykh" had been dead wrong.

However, I was still blocked, unable to think. I did not know that he had died in 1998; and I was still thinking about him in 2013, on top of a little mountain, almost exactly on the other side of the world from Bloomington, Indiana. In spite of all that had happened, if he had walked in, and explained, been normally human again, I could have changed. But I had forgotten about opening the Quran. Over and over again I was reading what God says in the Quran. *He* says that we *must* judge by the Quran. If we do not do so, we are astray, living in evil. The Quran also says to judge by the Sunnah. Twenty years had passed since I'd left the Tariqah: Still; I could not see what anything meant. And I *had* seen what was in the Quran many times; but I was not judging by what it said. In the back of my mind, there were many incidents too—sleeping there. What could wake me up? By then, I'd been out of the Tariqah for twenty years; but it wouldn't be long before everything would be crystal clear!

PROOF

PROOF

Chapter 26
Allahumma, is this the End?

"There's many a thing in Heaven and on earth, Horatio, that thou hast not imagined in Thy philosophie."

William Shakespeare

HE taught me, Himself!

Remember when I was afraid to open the Quran, over 15 years before this? I had asked for confirmation that God would accept to teach me through the opening of the Quran, if I found the verse, "Beautiful patience, and God is He whose Help is to be sought." And I found that verse. Then I asked about the condition of the Tariqah, and at least seven times, I got the same terrible verse, about the destruction of the people of Lot? Well, I had forgotten about those things; but after I'd been living in Swachamina Village for almost 13 years, I was looking around my apartment: There were literally over a hundred books: All original sources, ahadith and commentaries on the Quran. Those books were full of my notes too.

I had read in the Quran, umpteen times, that one must judge by what the Quran says. As for the Sunnah, the Quran says: "But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission." (an-Nisa' 4:65).

There were hundreds of passages in those books, all indicating that Frithjof Schuon was absolutely wrong; but I didn't dare criticize my spiritual master. I had been in jail because of him; I'd prayed, read, asked questions all over the

world; but I didn't really understand a thing. Suddenly, I reached my limit! I remembered God's promise of 15 years earlier, about teaching me through opening the Quran. I practically threw my Quran open, and pleaded, saying: "Allahumma *is this the end?* Will I never understand anything after I've been married to him, gone to jail, prayed, traveled, and read all I could find: Is there nothing I can understand, and nothing I can do for Thee?"

The answer was: "*We* will teach thee the interpretation of events" (*Tawil ul-ahadith*; تأويل الأحاديث). Absolutely delighted, I knew He was going to teach me all I needed to know, *some*time; but in the *mean*time—thinking I shouldn't just sit and wait for a grace of understanding, I thought I should make an effort myself, so I wrote little articles about things I'd half understood. Into the wastebasket they went!

However, I remembered a chart, illustrating the zones in humankind, that the Shaykh had drawn for me.[75] Then I remembered people I'd known with all kinds of gifts. I thought maybe there were gifts to the different zones in us, even a gift to the spirit. I did keep one little paper I wrote about. Well, I was hoping that paper I'd written would help me learn what Allah would teach me about "The interpretation of events."

In a few hours, or days—I forget—I was inundated with understanding! What the books around me were saying was the answer! And suddenly, all my experiences came forward from where they'd been stored in the back of my mind too. Answers were *everywhere*, and I'd had them all the time; but I hadn't quite dared think—because the subject was a spiritual master, with absolute authority, and sublime-seeming talk! All the Quran's verses, with notes marked, said what I had suspected. So I understood due to grace *and* due to the certain, corroborating criteria in the hundred or so books around me: In the Quran, in the commentaries on it, and in ahadith.

I was absolutely delighted to understand; *however*, after some time, I got scared: Maybe that wasn't the "Tawil ul-ahadith" (Interpretation of Events) that God taught me. Maybe it was from my own subjective self? Since I share everything I learn, I knew I'd be talking, sharing all I'd learned (like I'm doing with you now), so I begged Allah Ta'ala (Almighty God) to forgive me for asking for signs; and then I implored Him for a confirmation; and dared open the Quran again. I got the exact same words (Interpretation of Events),[76] but in a very different context. The first time God was telling Joseph that He would teach him the interpretation of events (before he unraveled the dreams of his fellow prisoners); but this time it was Khidr telling Moses (in the Surah of the

75 See Appendix V: A Chart of Human Zones.

76 The Interpretation of Events, has levels of meaning—like every word and letter in the Quran. I only learned at age 80, that it also means Gnosis: That's the Knowledge of the Truth about God... what I've always loved but been unable to reach. I hope that He will teach me before I die, or maybe even afterwards, what I've been unable to learn so far!

Cave): "This is the interpretation of the events about which ye doubted." I had doubted my own understanding; but believe me, I know I'm no comparison to Moses: These are *mutatis mutandis* analogies.

Days or weeks went by. I was still wondering if Frithjof Schuon didn't have a *gift to the spirit*... that his kind of intelligence had nothing to do with his superiority; I'd only understood his faults in character, and a little doctrine; but I couldn't understand why he had such great *spiritual* genius, without being a saint. You see: I had thought *lifelong*, that spiritual intelligence meant goodness too.

Scared again,[77] I opened the Quran: The same words, "Tawil ul-Ahadith" were in yet another place in the Quran! I think it was also about Joseph though. Anyway, I was re-reading my scribbles on gifts and trying to assimilate everything; suddenly it all seemed easy!

So, I saw that I understood practically everything; but suddenly the idea came to my mind: Perhaps God has trained me through all my trials to be a reformer. I dared to quickly open my Quran again, and I asked Him: "Allahumma! Is it possible that through all these trials, I've been trained to be a reformer?" It said, "Reformers…" Ay ay ay! I was half thrilled to death to have a job, and half feeling exceedingly burdened with responsibility. Also, there was no way *anyone* could reform *anything* on the top of a little mountain in Pakistan, so I was certain I had to leave as soon as possible and try to reform something, somehow, in the United States. But I had not the slightest idea what to do or how. However, I thought everything was going to be very easy, because I had some kind of a divine appointment. Rarely have I been so wrong! Leaving Pakistan was excruciatingly difficult, and when I arrived in the US, it was as if I'd moved into a desert land! I would have troubles for the next eight years.

While I was trying to get out of Pakistan, I kept studying all those books that were all around me. There were passages in the Quran, about spiritual reform: I read those over and over again. One that went straight to my heart, because I felt so helpless, was a saying by Shu'aib, an Arabian Prophet who isn't mentioned in the Bible: "All I want is reform in as much as I am able. My success is only from God. Upon Him do I rely and to Him I turn repentant." Oh la la! That was what I'd seen above the arch, in the museum near my office, when I'd just arrived in Switzerland to become a disciple of an "unsurpassable spiritual master!"

Above, under this heading, as in a previous one, you see what God Himself said—the same God we all have; but in this case, the God who speaks in the Quran. The followers of Frithjof Schuon, who are still following him, and

77 There really are reasons to have pious fear of God—and all the more so in the situation I was in: God can become angry if one abuses the possibility of asking for signs. The usual way is to use one's God-given faculties like reason. Mine had failed due to being up against an extraordinarily gifted man, who had false visions and who was hidden behind layers of camouflage too.

who dismiss *my* warnings, say that there are "forces of darkness" against "the Shaykh." No, there are forces from God, which are warning you and me.

How to get out?

When I wanted to leave Pakistan that time, to go back to the US (because the Quran had said "reformers") I assumed that everything would go like greased lightning, because I had such a good job!

However, there was a detail: At that time I hadn't had a valid visa for most of my stay in Pakistan, so I'd been there illegally. The reason was that the Government was so terrible, that every time I'd gone to renew my visa, that man in the green turban, had always told me to "wait" because my visa would come in the mail. Now don't ask me why a green turban upset me *then*; but the general impression it gave was decidedly sinister, sectarian, *and* warlike. War against who, I couldn't say, but certainly not against us Americans, as he was employed specifically to renew visas for us. *Now* I know that green turbans only mean good; but that man was trouble. And if you don't believe me, ask the Lord!

Long after this time, I understood that he was remembered for some negative reason; but everyone refrained from saying *what* reason! That's the way things are with people who wear something so unusual and who act tough: No one talks afterwards. They just said, "He's gone now," and I drew sinister conclusions! Well, I waited years, telephoned and wrote letters: No answer. Then I went to talk to him with my son-in-law. Being a woman, I was left behind in the canteen, where I met a couple of Swedish doctors, who were leaving Afghanistan, after years of volunteering their medical help, and who seemed quite likeable, but also prejudiced about Islam. Wherever I go or have to wait, I learn more.

The man in the green turban was off that day; but came in specially to see Jamal and invited him out to lunch. They had a pleasant time together; Jamal said he was "a very nice man;" but at the end, that man told Jamal, "Tell her to *wait!*" Believing that he really was nice, I'd forgive him. At the time, I thought he must know some top secret diplomatic problem; and that he was actually helping us by saying, "Wait!" Maybe, he felt sorry for all of us, and knew I'd be refused a renewal: He heard from Jamal what a close family we were.

So, in order to leave Pakistan I needed a waiver from the Ministry of the Interior, saying "Nevermind that she was here without a visa." (The visa fees had added up to be too much to pay, or there was some other problem too. I've forgotten). But my daughter and I had war in that Ministry: An important man refused to believe I'd become a Muslim 54 years back, because I had no certificate, signed by two adult male witnesses. Well, there hadn't been two witnesses, remember; I was supposedly made a Muslim by the witness of one lying faqir. And no one I knew had even been alive back then.

Finally, I thought of a wording that was sibylline; but I didn't lie; and two men who hadn't even been alive then (old colleagues at The Islamic Society) signed a paper saying that they swore I was a Muslim on such a day, in 1960. Yes, I was a Muslim on that day. Those two ex-colleagues signed on Islamic Society letterhead; but I don't think that organization existed back then either! So that was accepted, but the man *still* refused to believe I was really a Muslim and not an American terrorist or a spy. (At that time, Americans were causing lots of trouble in Pakistan, and he told me about bombs buried under gardens, etc). I swore on the Quran, recited Surahs and offered to pray in front of him. He looked me straight in the eye, and said, "You are not a Muslim!" While my daughter turned pale, I finally lost my temper, and informed him that according to Bukhari,[78] that meant *he* was not a Muslim (You can't say someone is not a Muslim, because if you're wrong, *you* are not a Muslim, according to a hadith he didn't know)! But he was such a crass and ignorant type, that he didn't know a hadith from a goat. Finally he stamped my waiver; however, he put me on the blacklist: I could never return to Pakistan. Six men had been to our house to investigate me too; but the Government was so disorganized that their reports were filed somewhere else.

Meanwhile, my daughter and I had spent days in the office of another official, named Abdul Hayy. He quite sympathized with all we were going through, and said he could get me back in if I ever wanted to come. Next scene: I got to the airport, where the officials were supposed to stamp "no re-entry" in my passport. I saw them go off and talk together: Then they came back and did *not* put that stamp in my passport! And praise the Lord, because I would never have been allowed into any country, without tons of trouble after that! I happen to love the Indo-Pakistani people; but I've never seen anything worse than some Pakistani bureaucrats: They take the cake!

That story was one among many I've endured: For some reason, born believers, pretty much on the other side of the world, have a different kind of degeneration: They aren't hyper-dynamic like us Occidentals;, but they can be unbelievably ignorant and lax. And I have no idea why, but they can be so unperceptive about people, as to be on the border of dangerous! Why in the world is that? I've encountered it all through my many adventures.[79] Finally, I boarded the plane, and off I went to reform something; but I wasn't at all sure what or how. The words of Shu'aib were always with me: My success would only come from God. There's another hadith about that: Once a man volunteered to do something extremely difficult; but then he couldn't eat, drink

78 Bukhari is the most respected compiler of ahadith.

79 Seven years later, when I wanted to move back to Pakistan, I ended up having to sleep in the airport for five days, because Abdul Hayy was wrong! I *was* on the blacklist and had endless troubles with Immigration Officials, the Police and the FIA, which is like the FBI in the US.

or sleep for three days, due to worry. Then came the hadith: You have to try; success comes only from Allah.

PROOF

Chapter 27
Misery with Roses

"Allah extends provision for whom He wills of His slaves, and restricts it for whom (He wills). Verily, Allah is the All-Knower of all things."

Quran, 29:62

Back home to reform the world

Getting out of Pakistan, in 2013, was unbelievably hard. Thinking I had a divine mission... Well, *maybe* I did... Graces are not to be used as definitive reasons; but I had every objective reason to want to reform my people; and, as far as I knew, I was the one who knew the most, so I was indispensable. I tried to leave Pakistan for the US, and you might have thought, as I did, that moving back to the United States would happen like greased lightning. Not for a penny!

I told my people in Swachamina, that I couldn't stand the heat and the cold anymore, now that I was 75. That was true and might have been a reason; but my real reason was the Quran's answer: "reformers." The discomfort in living there could well have sent me away anyway though. If only I'd been a more practical person, living there could have been easy; but I had failed with every move I made to have a more comfortable life. Every time I budged, I'd get taken advantage of, cheated, have poor work done, or have pre-paid workers leave before completing their jobs.

Living there as a naïve American was like begging for trouble. The only man I had, my son-in-law, Jamal, was even more naïve than I was. I was hard

to surpass in being naïve; but Jamal did it. In building only my upstairs part of the house, he paid *five* workmen before they'd finished, and just guess: Not one ever came back! Our whole, lovely house, designed by me, seemed to be falling apart at the seams. In a depression or something, I was saying many times a day: "Allahumma, help me get out of here." The dilapidation was too much—at least then.

The least of my problems was that there were so many people to help, and I'd been too generous, so when the time came to leave, I couldn't even afford a ticket, much less any of the many steps "we" had to take to get me out. "We" meant my precious daughter, Qadri, and I. There was never an "I," when she was around. Although her heart was bleeding at the thought of my leaving Pakistan, she poured all her strength into getting me out, because she knew I had to leave. She was the only one who understood the real reason—albeit the reason I was telling "publicly" was also true at its level. She even, heaven save me, managed to borrow enough for me to leave, from two ladies who'd never met *me*; they only knew *her* integrity. Only five years later did good Muslims pay those ladies back on my behalf.

The biggest part of our problem was the Pakistani Ministry of the Interior—hours away from us, in Islamabad. I was feeling so weak, that we could only get me to that Ministry, lying down. That meant an expensive conveyance, with my lying down on a hard bench, my head on Qadri's lap.

But it wasn't the ride that was so bad: There was a man in that Ministry, in charge of my "case"—the most bigoted, non-Muslim kind of so-called Muslim, I've ever met! He refused to believe I was a Muslim, and kept insinuating that I had been there as an American spy, or worse—as a terrorist. I swore on the Quran that I was a Muslim, recited verses from the Quran, offered to pray in front of him, do anything. He had a recommendation letter from The Islamic Society where I'd worked, and ten, mostly grown, children were recommending me—as was everyone in our village. But he wanted a certificate, dated 53 years previously, signed by two witnesses, who had *seen* me accept Islam at age 20. But no one had seen me, remember: I had been alone in a locked room, with the lying German faqir. Moreover, there was a detail: I didn't know anyone who'd been alive back then!

Finally, exasperated, I called The Islamic Society, where I had a whole building full of friends. Two men, who hadn't even been alive then, signed a certificate saying that I *was* a Muslim on such and such a date. They didn't say they'd seen me become a Muslim. It was worded by a genius: Me, haha! Usually I try to be modest... No! It wasn't me, the genius: Our Lord inspired me to write a perfectly genial sentence, so as not to lie.

You may wonder why I needed that Ministry to get *out* of the country; and given that particular Minister's ideas of me, you'd have thought he'd expel me. Well, Pakistan is a poorly governed land. To live there for 13 years, I needed to

become a dual citizen (I'd tried) *or*, I had to have an ever valid visa. *However*, the Visa-man, that strong-as-steel-looking type, in a green turban, had told me to wait for my visa to come by mail—for too many years. I'd done that, ever reminding him, and taking Jamal with me to talk in Urdu. Even then, the man told Jamal, "Tell her to wait!"

One day, Qadri and I were in a roomful of waiting foreigners. Up front was a tough-as-nails Pakistani official. Finally, it was my turn; but Qadri took over, as that man was more accessible through Urdu. Besides, I knew when to make her boss. She was a woman who'd hardly been out of her house in her life, and she'd never dreamt of talking to such a man. Exhausted, I was fading away in the chair beside her; but I revived due to watching her: She turned into a tiger, opposite that bully! They seemed (not really) to be nose to nose, with her growling at him—spouting impeccable logic!

He soon let us go—or at least, maybe he was glad to be rid of *her*; I was being carried along by my ever competent "tutti frutti." She was so smart she could hear the grass grow; but she'd never even heard of paperwork before. Once she'd experienced that, she told me that there would be no more troubles for her in that field. She was still illiterate, while speaking several languages, but she sure knew how to get around. Once our water *geyser* (heater) broke down, so according to Jamal, we needed another unreliable plumber. She put a brick somewhere, to hold a button down, and we had no trouble after that.

During our weeks of negotiations, we spent hours waiting, for some reason in the office of a different high official, named Abdul Hayy. We really liked him, and he treated her as his sister and me as his mother. Of course he knew all about the insanity and its spokesman we were facing. He even knew about the man in the green turban. Well, Abdul Hayy helped us, with encouragement, and although I've left Pakistan, he still calls his "sister," Qadri, and we are never going to forget that man, who was a jewel in a very dark place, when it was at its darkest.

Somehow, I got out; but that goose caused me so much aggravation, that I have a hard time forgetting him—a model of a major catastrophic bureaucrat. After thirteen years there, I'd only seen my father into his grave, studied Islam, and poured my quite relative "wealth" upon people much poorer than I. Six pairs of Government employees had also been to our house to investigate me. Although heart-warmed to see our lives together, their ever so positive reports about me, were not available in the Ministry of the Interior.

Poor and helpless

When I finally arrived in the US, my adopted (of course), Pakistani brother, Shahid, picked me up in Chicago. Also, of course, his car was full of other Pakistanis. They're like sandpipers, those Pakistanis: They love company, and

never come alone, or even in pairs. This time his wife and three children were there, but sometimes there's a big hall, all full of every type: Cousins (called brothers and sisters), in-laws of everyone, and their relatives of relatives.

As soon as I possibly could, I moved out of his house into an apartment of my own; but it wasn't very nice and I was discombobulated to find myself helpless, useless, and humiliated by being so very poor. When anyone saw my empty apartment he was appalled to see one old mattress on the floor. Only now am I beginning to realize that all these stages have their roles in our growth.

There are 99 Divine Names of God in Islam, and those are descriptions of His Nature, or Attributes. Well there are two that can never be separated, Al-Qabidh and Al-Basit (The Restrictor and the Extender). Among other things, that combination means that God sometimes withholds our livelihood, in order to keep us stable and sober, solid when He gives us ease. The two names are also inseparable in the sense that it is not permissible to mention either one without the other. That is because if you say that God is Al-Qabidh (the Withholder), it would mean that you describe Him as being miserly; and God is far above that. However, He is powerful and wise in the way that He withholds in order to extend, does harm in order to do good, decreases in order to increase, or abases in order to exalt in honor.

In my new apartment, there seemed to be endless problems and hardly any solutions. Although my brother kept saying helpful things, he didn't use his eyes, or his common sense. According to the Sunnah, which he taught, I could not complain or ask for help. I couldn't even afford a broom, so I cleaned my floors I forget how. Having no transportation, I finally found out how I could walk to a bus or to a grocery store—and that was where I bought roses. Those are not at all my favorites, and they were unmixed with any other flower, whereas I was used to making bouquets by mixing colors and sizes, wildflowers with large ones like lilies and peonies. Finally, I got the idea of going for long walks, mostly by the sides of highways; but there I found an old favorite: Queen Anne's Lace.

As for reform, I hadn't the faintest idea what to do; but I bought some huge pads of paper and wrote a book by hand. In Pakistan, my daughter and I had a publisher-friend, who had come to our house and met us. I'd edited a six-volume commentary on the Quran for him, free. He was a great admirer of mine and a sure publisher, ready to accept anything I'd write. So I mailed him my handwritten book; but a few days before it arrived, he died of a heart attack! I prayed for him, and then told my daughter to keep that book in a safe place: I had to think this over.

Months later, having some ideas as to other publishers, I told her to mail it back by registered mail. I waited and waited; but it was nowhere it should have

been, and for the most complicated reasons, there was nothing I could do. It seems it fell into the ocean: No one knew.

Little by little, I dragged little pieces of furniture home from a neighborhood second-hand store, and then painted and glued them together. Other things that people in my apartment building threw away, I dragged in and repaired too. Then, after maybe a year, I met a lady, who came near my back porch every day to feed the feral cats, that lived in the neighborhood. She was a Godsend! Finally, I'd met a charitable person! She got her husband to bring home bigger pieces of second-hand furniture in their truck, and she drove me wherever I needed to go too—patiently teaching me how the country worked. One day she even found me a much better place to live, at Lakeview Village: That looked like another heaven.

Once, before meeting that cat lady, and at tremendous expense, I took a cab to a store, and bought a cat! She was extremely pretty, and I named her Sweetie Pie (the Second). But that cat was not normal: She was so anxious that she would not greet anyone or let herself be petted—nothing! And no one I knew would sign a paper required by my new apartment building at Lakeview, saying they would take her if anything happened to me. There was no one I could give her to either; so I was at a dead end with an unfortunate cat!

I had to have her put to sleep, or have no apartment; there was no choice. But then, my only helpful friend, the cat-lady, wouldn't help me anymore! She was hopping mad, and detested me for putting a cat to sleep, although she was one of those who wouldn't sign a guarantee to provide a place for Sweetie Pie if I died or something. There were others, but she was one of a new kind of person I'd meet in the US—people who like animals more than people. She had 30 (!) cats herself, and 12 lived in the house with her and her husband! But my beautiful Sweetie Pie didn't accept people, and when I'd tried to introduce another cat, she tried to kill it! No one could hold her at a shelter; no one would adopt her ever, so she would live in a cage for the rest of her life, *if* I found a no-kill shelter. The whole thing was impossible. Life for me was nigh unto impossible too. I didn't despair though.

Various people helped me here and there, superficially, and for short periods, in some way or other; but I was really alone with my Forever Friend, our Lord. I knew He was there; but I had no idea why everything was so impossible. Five years later, I'd have over 16,000 visits, from 188 countries, to my online site of reform, and I'd have bouquets of flowers in every room.

Although my "voice had been murdered" in the so-called "Tariqah," that only meant that dozens or, at most, hundreds, of people I had known, would never listen to me again. Thirty years later, my "voice" would be all over the world. My Protecting Friend would soon manifest as The Extender; and I guess the years of His Being the Restrictor, were for strengthening me. But there were probably endless other reasons: One was that I had time alone,

to pray and reflect. By the time I found a way to reform, I had realized what needed reforming, and words were ready.

Meanwhile, I learned what it was like to be vulnerable. Life seemed pinched, except as concerned those roses, and some wildflowers I picked in walking far on busy roads. Although I'd had cats nearly all my life, I could never even find a good cat either. Once I let a stray in, and loved him to death. He was extremely handsome and sweet; but I guess his owners had locked him out because he was very ill. Soon realizing that, I took him to a vet, who told me he was ancient and had a serious disease: He had to be taken to a special shelter to die.

Then the man who sold roses in my grocery store, said he had a litter of kittens and would deliver some for me to choose one. Sight unseen, I said "Fine!"; no choice anyway. When he arrived, in came a crate full of miserable looking grey kittens. I had to take one, and he grew up to be charming; but he was so mean to Honeybun, another cat I found, that I had to give him away. *Wherever* I went, *nothing* worked out well. Soon all that changed: I moved into another apartment, and that seemed like "Luxury." The apartment complex was called "Lakeview!"

Chapter 28
Luxury at Lakeview

"I see trees of green, red roses too;
I see them bloom for me and you.
And I think to myself what a wonderful world!"
Song by Louis Armstrong

Back into heaven again!

The minute I moved into another apartment building, life became easy. Half my rent was paid by the American Government; there were little buses to take us residents to stores; the Government paid for my doctors and medicine—even for part of my food. An American "Senior Citizen" can have a life of Riley! I had flowers in every room, and often remembered a poem that "Sammy" used to recite:

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.

(Edna St. Vincent Millay, as adapted by me)

Aside from having a new and easy life, quite by accident I discovered technology! Then, being old, alone, and free as a bird, I began to explore the world

on the internet, and had a marvelous time—seeing everything, meeting people and collecting 8,000 photographs of practically everything that exists. I'd given up on finding a spiritual path too, so I went wild, watching every kind of dancing I'd seen before in my "traditionally worldly ex-Tariqah:" African, Balinese, Hindu, and yes, we saw several belly dancers in Greek restaurants.

I saved pictures in albums—of all the costumes in the world, all animals, children, women, churches and temples. It was endless and so much fun! No one needs to be bored these days. Then I joined Facebook groups that posted pictures of nature, cultures, costumes, religions... and little by little I made friends—often by mistake; but I've got some jewels left.

A way to reform appeared!

After exasperating tries and failures, I finally got a site[80] on the internet, where I did the job I'd come to the US to do! On my little, but smart, phone, I wrote all I had to say to warn people. To my astonishment, people came from many more countries than I'd ever even heard of! And I got letters from grateful people, some of whom called me "my beloved" in Russian or Japanese... some of whom are my friends now, and some of whom were fuqara I'd known, who had left and told me the ends of their stories. Yet others were from exceedingly intelligent scholars; and others were from readers of the books of Frithjof Schuon, who would never have imagined what he was like personally. Some were nuts, and others accused me of things I'd never even heard of. I learned much from those people, nearly all of whom wanted to remain anonymous (Why?) but I added many of their words to mine. I guess they were afraid of endless complications, revenge and lawsuits. Me too: At first I thought I'd prefer my dear apartment at Lakeview, to a second stay in a jail cell. Then I realized that their even getting me into a courtroom to argue, would take so long that I'd likely be dead first, *and* they have so much to hide that a public dispute with me would be *quite* unwise.

I found Latifeli!

I found lost friends! One of the first was Murayyim, daughter of my second sister-wife, who I'd first met when she was 12, and when I was 26, in Pully, Switzerland! We even had much in common, although she has lost her faith and is devoting herself to compassion for animals, veganism, and an anti-cult movement. Much more surprising: She told me that Catherine Schuon was still alive, and living in the same house, an hour's drive from me! At that time, I was living in Indianapolis, whereas Latifeli was still alive in Bloomington!

80 frithjofschuon.wordpress.com

My heart soared with love for her again, and I hadn't yet launched my site for reform: *maybe* there could be peace instead of reform!

Not being very smart, but full of goodwill, I wrote to her lovingly. We exchanged a few letters and phone calls, and I told her only good things and tried to get to see her, because I hoped with all my heart, that before publishing my site, we could be at peace and agree with one another, or one would teach the other, because she's a very reasonable woman—at least much of the time. I'm always hoping I've been wrong: Someone might teach me a whole new conceptual dimension. As had been the case lifelong, I thought many people were just plain better than I was. It hadn't fully sunk in that I must accept what God said in the Quran. Actually, it was only later—when I found true Gnostics and other real Shuyukh: They told me, in so many words (without words actually: I had to figure it out) that I had to "judge by the Quran"—*both* in its meaning and in the passages I found by grace—passages which agreed with the meaning in the Quran. The graces said the exact same things that the Quran teaches, and one must judge by the Quran.

Latifeli has been very ill for years with arteritis: An inflammation of the arteries, which is extremely painful. No one in "The family" was well in old age, except me. Both Perrys had very bad Alzheimer's disease; and Badriyyeli died when she was about 65, whereas I've never even known pain in my life at 80!

Once, when I was talking to Sayyidah Latifah on the telephone, she told me how Sayyidah Badriyyah had gone on lying for 15 more years after I left; and Sayyidah Latifah had never said a word to the Shaykh about it. He never knew that there was anything the matter with her, or that she was lying all the time. After the Shaykh died, the whole community rejected her, because she married again and told everyone that he had allowed her to. That's absolutely impossible: He would never have allowed her to marry again! She was his one and only great Shakti; but she did marry again. Then, after some years, she got a tumor in her stomach which was as big as a coconut. She was operated on and it was removed; but the wound never sealed and the cancer spread throughout her body. She suffered so much that I couldn't stand to hear anybody tell me all about it: However, Sayyidah Latifah hoped it was purification for her. I do hope so too. Before dying, she asked forgiveness of everyone in the community. Sidi Xyz told me that, on the day he came as an ambassador.

I had been out of touch with Sayyidah Latifah for thirty years by then, and she told me a few things that had happened meantime. She had heard that I lived in a certain province in Pakistan which wasn't far from Afghanistan, so she didn't try to get in touch with me, as the fuqara had thought I could be involved with the Taliban fanatics (!). Also, for many years her phone rang every few days and she would answer; then somebody would hang up. She was sure it was me; so she would say: "Amineli, if it's you, say something," but the person said nothing. That was probably Sidi Faisal; but they had such a

low opinion of me—such a scary cult-like opinion that everything was on my head; and when I wanted someone to go from Bloomington to Indianapolis, to talk to me, no one would come but the very one who had put me in jail!

Although I wept and practically begged to see her—hoping one of us could teach the other, she had several excuses. I did finally convince her to send an "ambassador," and she chose the lawyer-faqir Xyz, who had me put in jail! I laughed good-heartedly, and said: "I won't look a gift horse in the mouth!"

Good old Xyz came to see me!

In he came, from his milieu of perfect comfort and wealth, looking thirty years older, but with the same sort of "aura" of sincerity and solid integrity about him.[81] And there I was, in an apartment building for poor older Americans. When he walked into the lobby, I was massaging the neck of an old lady who had just gone blind. Loretta needed an oxygen tank to breathe, and had aches and pains; but her worst problem was that her children just wanted to be rid of her. Loretta soon passed away; but she left me with a special warmth—the exact opposite of what some others left me with. She knew nothing about anything much, and wasn't a strong person; but she was grateful for anything and resented nothing. Once I hugged her and told her I loved her; she said she knew I loved her and she loved me too. While I was holding her, I felt such a sweet, dying, loving kindness in her frail body. Later I saw her children through the open door of her apartment, clearing out her things, so I said something nice to them; but it was obvious they had just wanted her out of the way.

Xyz and I laughed together over the past—trying to be amicable, as if nothing had ever happened. At one point he asked my forgiveness for anything he might have done wrong. So naturally, I joined suit, asked his forgiveness, and forgave him. Then I gave him a big earful of good explanations about everything. He was so polite, looked like greased sincerity as usual, and left nicely, leaving me a book for a present. Come to think of it, that gorgeously designed publication, by World Wisdom Books, was an example of the same kind of aristocratic and traditional good taste that permeates the whole Tariqah and keeps people bound.

When we were all on our way to the US from Switzerland, and had met him in some airport where we changed planes, he and I had a talk. Remember: I was slightly wary about leaving my perfect job, because I'd be subject to him. The two other wives were wealthy and owned their houses; but if I ever

81 My psychic friend, Ronda, was teaching me about her gift for reading character through auras; and I was showing her photographs of people far more gifted and complex than any she'd seen lifelong. She saw Xyz as a young man, and loved him the way I did. When she saw a photograph of him, much older, she could not believe he was the same person! Alas! That's what happens when one stays too long, and too closely, around a liar.

did something he didn't like, I could have have no place to live. He kept my house (Well, Sidi Abdul Ali's too; but he didn't really count, because I was the beloved) in his name. I said, "What if I do something you don't like someday?" (Sorry to say it, but I thought I was vastly superior to him, in some way. I still do; but in what way? One shouldn't be proud; but I had a *lot* more God-given imagination)!

So a decade later, with excuses I could not tell anyone, I thought I wasn't married, had "an affair" and caused a scandal. Xyz would not let me even *see* "my" house, take care of Sidi Abdul Ali when he was ill, *or* walk on the road all our houses were on! Now far behind and ahead of all that (I think; but you decide for yourself) was the fact that someday, I was going to be fighting for the Truth, when almost everyone around me was going astray. It *appeared* as if *I* was astray, and *everyone else* was as good as gold!

So what happened afterwards? I was very poor for thirty years, due to Xyz, who had no idea *why* he should say "Forgive me!" I had to clean houses, and live among some sleazy characters; but *I do not regret a single thing!* Guess why? It was all *God's will. He* wanted to test me, and as you'll see, He took care of me too. I *could* easily forgive good old Xyz for anything; but I sure wished he were smart enough to realize what a sycophant he had been, and *why* he was saying "Forgive me!" Actually, only God can really forgive sins, but he doesn't forgive idolatry, and one has to repent—knowing what one did, not just talk! And that poor old Xyz was *still* committing idolatry the day I saw him; but alas, I tried to tell him and couldn't. Thirty years before, I thought I should warn him about lying; but his wife said he was away.

I can be an idiot—sometimes for decades; but I'm improving! Soon after the door closed behind him, I realized that he had done me so much irreparable harm, only as far as this world is concerned though, that he couldn't possibly have known why he was asking forgiveness. That man is not a real person, so I'm taking his name away, leaving him anonymous; and he can just go blow in my shoes! The day after he left I published my site online.

Ronda and her guardian angel

New friends grew up on the internet like flowers in the spring; and one who loved nature and all cultures, turned out to be a highly gifted psychic, who could read auras amazingly well. Although I was shocked to find that out, we were already friends before she told me. And yours truly doesn't break friendships unless a so-called "friend" practically kills her, so I'd go through a lot with Ronda (that's her name) and her guardian angel, Michael (yes, the Archangel Michael) who had been talking to her since she was three years old.

That became quite interesting; but Michael disappeared for good after I'd been around for awhile. He had the same narrow-minded ideas she had about

other religions like mine, so I knew he was no Archangel. But she was objective and intelligent, so I tactfully told her that he might be only a believing spirit, who needed her physical existence. You see, they are called "disembodied spirits," because they are exactly that, and getting involved with them in any way, is extremely dangerous, because they long for a physical body, another way of being. Those spirits are real, and many of them can be a royal nuisance. Others are pious believers and good. Anyway, I very highly recommend avoiding all of them! Spirits are exceedingly tricky—well, unless you're a very holy person, a Prophet. Many are believers; but never think you can know which ones.

Once when she was in a crisis and he didn't come, I told Ronda my thesis about Michael; but then she herself found the answer. I had been wrong; but I taught her and then she taught me. "Michael," the Archangel, exists in most religions in some form, so he should have known about who he was in other "worlds;" but he knew nothing about other religions and had the exact same Protestant prejudices she had! Ronda was objective enough to understand. I guess her psychic Michael was pretty smart too—quite smart enough to never come back; and good riddance!

Then I got the second stage in my education in reading auras. Remember, when I was in Switzerland, I'd known the "radiesthesist," named Georges Lambelet? He was honest, jovial and friendly, so we had shared our lives' adventures and he taught me about his gift. Well, Ronda is much more gifted with auras, whereas he has been impeccably well-trained to use the aura to diagnose and cure illnesses. A detail fascinates me: He told me that he had to lean against an oak tree every weekend, placing his back and the palms of his hands on it for an hour or so. If he didn't do that, he lost his strength for healing. I'd forgotten that when Ronda mentioned that she became stronger by walking counter-clockwise around an oak tree! She advises others to do that too; but many things in nature increase the strength of her gifts: Walking on the ground barefoot, and thunderstorms!

All in all, I learned; but so did she! I showed her photographs of people in my past, who were stronger and more complex than any she'd seen before! Praise the Lord, I managed to get a little education in innocently, usefully used, gifts. However, be careful: There's a lot of trouble out there, and I told you all earlier on: Someone with psychic gifts can cause so many problems that almost no one should go near them. I was protected when young, and now (I think) I'm pretty smart; but it sure took a long time to get halfway there! When I was younger, and married to Sidi Abdul Ali, he only gave me one out and out order: The rest of the time, he let me be, out of respect for my intelligence; but he was right when he forbade me once to correspond with a psychic couple, who wanted to be friends. I'd met them by mail through my job, not knowing that they were all wrapped up in psychic phenomenon, until I received a private letter at my office.

The whole subject of psychics and psychic gifts is highly problematic; but you must know me by now: If something concerns people, I want to find out about it. Ronda was also an "empath;" and that's a gift one is better off without. Whenever she went near people, she would feel all their joys and troubles—so she had to avoid crowds, and even small groups. As a nurse, she had been present when people died having no belief in God. Feeling the condition of their souls had been so painful that she had to get out of that part of her job. On the other hand, she thrived and so did children, animals and plants, when she was near them.

Since I'm a boxful of questions (and I put her through the ringer) I managed to learn a lot. Everyone and everything has an aura, and it's a normally invisible coating of the soul on the skin, or object. It has layers: She could see a picture and say, "What a radiant, cheerful person!" But when she took an hour, and used much strength, she could say, "No! That's a trickster, extremely deceptive and evil." (That happened once, when she saw a photo of a prisoner I was writing to).

The gift is extremely limited, in that it shows nothing about the spirit of a person.[82] Someone like Ronda can't tell the difference between a very nice person and a saint. But this gets worse! The aura doesn't show depth, so once I knew someone who was extremely nice, sort of perfect; but he was distressing to be with. He didn't react differently to a smiley face or the Parables in the Bible. He always said, "That's cute!" until I was about to climb a wall! Actually, he was a perfect product of what I tell you about often: He had no sense of hierarchy left. When push comes to shove, that means that someone can hardly have an idea of who God is.

Don't think I showed her pictures of everyone I knew—only problem people and enough to learn and draw a conclusion. That conclusion is: All gifts are interesting; they are all from our Lord. If one uses them for good, fine; but having psychic gifts is pretty much of a nuisance and a trial—with few exceptions. And never count completely on someone with psychic gifts: They get "intuitions" and can even think they're talking to an Archangel for 60 years. It's best to stay away from them: I'm only sharing my life with you... and curiosity is all woven into that life. Hahyhu(¡) Einstein said, "I have no particular genius; I'm just passionately curious!"

In a hadith, Gabriel (who revealed the Quran, which is the Divine Word, to Muhammad, as He "revealed" Jesus, who *is* the Divine Word in the form of a man, to Mary) showed Muhammad the numbers of his followers: "So I looked and saw a huge multitude. He (Gabriel) said, 'These are your ummah (The people in your community) and these are seventy thousand at their head who will not be brought to account or punished.' I said, 'Why is that?' He said,

82 See Appendix VI: A Chart of Human Zones.

'They do not use branding, or seek *ruqya*, or believe in bad omens; they put their trust in their Lord.'"

Now not using ruqya refers to a legitimate way of healing, using revealed Quranic verses as medicine (It works). The point however, is that God loves especially those who leave aside everything in the way of sources for help: They only trust in Him directly, and He is the Real Cause of everything—even the falling of a drop of rain. That's my real attitude: Curiosity only leads to knowledge though, and questions lead to God in the end.

Here's another hadith I'm crazy about, which has endless applications: "Allah said: Among my servants are those who awaken with faith in Me and (others awaken with) disbelief in Me. Whoever said we have been given rain due to the favor and mercy of Allah, he is a believer in Me and a disbeliever in the stars. Whoever said we have been given rain due to the rising of this star, he has disbelieved in Me and has put his faith in the stars." (Sahīh Bukhārī, 810).

That means that God is the real cause of everything that happens; and the more we believe in other causes, the less we're believing in Him. One has to go to doctors sometimes, take medicine, protect oneself from floods; but the final cause of our success is Him. One word for success in Arabic means the success that comes only from God. And He Knows why we are treated as we are, why we receive what seems good and what seems not so. *His* plan is perfect; we won't realize that until life is over; but we can have glimpses of Divine Providence.

There's something more that's important about psychics, gifts in general, and us fascinating people: We were made in layers; and with increasing knowledge of us humans, I've drawn another conclusion. I've concluded that the only really interesting "layer" in our natures is not a layer at all. It's our innermost part, our center, in which is the image of God. The aura, which less than 1% of people can see, is our outermost, invisible to most of us, layer on the skin. Then, going inwards, comes the body, the soul or psyche, and then the spirit, a center in which God has placed a mirror of Himself.[83] That's why the Bible says we were made in the image of God.

Walking with Christians in the Bible Belt

For the first time in my life, at Lakeview, there were no Muslims around me. In fact there was no one of any religion other than Protestant Christianity. No races either, aside from a very few African Americans—and no one knew any language other than English. That got worse! My neighbors were, at best, extremely poorly-educated; some could hardly read or write... and here's

83 See Appendix VI: A Chart of Human Zones.

the very worst: They thought ISIS was Islam, and many were very prejudiced against Muslims!

I shut my eyes and fell asleep there, because I saw a barren land. Then I woke up when I heard that there were two Bible classes in my building. I was dying to study the Bible—and I wanted to study it *with them*, because I always love seeing from different points of view. So as not to be behaving like a spy; I had to tell everyone I'd been a Muslim for my whole adult life, that Muslims love Jesus and that He is in the Quran… Well, they *all*, even the most ignorant ones, acted like good Christians. They were sweet and compassionate, said, "Everyone has the right to his own beliefs, we understand, and welcome!"

Right away it was obvious that I knew a lot—about the Bible, Christianity and all things spiritual. I asked questions that made the teachers think… and I had a dream: Maybe I could be an ambassador among religions, help my neighbors understand Islam, learn to talk to their level, and learn about Protestantism at the same time. The two Bible teachers and I got along like birds on a branch: I really loved them both and they loved me; but soon I began to hear talk. Some of the attendants at classes were saying they couldn't stand to see me there because I didn't believe. And it became obvious that everyone—especially the two teachers who were my best friends—was trying to convert me! Well, I don't "convert;" but I accept the truth everywhere it's found, so I visited churches, met and loved Pastors, learned and taught about Islam too when I got a chance, not to convert anyone, but to curb rampant prejudice and incredible ignorance.

The Prince of the powers of the air[84]

If you haven't noticed, the devil is everywhere, and one of his best tricks is attaching himself to the good, the beautiful, or the true. Something will be wonderful, but there'll be a little flaw in it that Satan gets into, so one swallows the good, and in he goes with it.

I'm going to give you a few examples. One was in a Bible study book: I could not abide a story about a little boy who didn't believe in Jesus Christ. Someone explained Jesus to the child, *on his own level*; and then the child said: "I like Jesus. He's cool!" Now maybe somebody thinks that was intelligent teaching; but it made me furious. The triviality and the lack of seeing a distance in height... the lack of the ability to see how great Jesus Christ was in comparison to a child, to an adult, to a saint, to anyone and anything in the world, to the highest mountain... but this little remark was put in the Bible study book as if that were a good way to *teach* children, to bring things down

84 This a name of Satan in the Bible, Ephesians 2:1–2.

to their level. I just couldn't stand it, because no one even noticed; and when I protested they didn't react much. I never went back there.

That same day, I saw on the bulletin board: "Jesus is crazy about us" and my stomach curdled. Everything is rendered trivial—even Jesus Christ is lowered by Christians. They are *not* alone: Muslims are just as bad. Triviality and lack of respect are everywhere, and at home, those faults are producing children who are wrecks.

One other, tiny way the devil is getting into the modern world is by "inspiring" people to take the capital letters off words. If you just drive along in a modern city you'll see billboard signs and advertisements, the names of organizations without capital letters. Capital letters symbolize something. Not only the absolute, as in the truth with a capital "T," which means God, but the capital letter is, on a very low level, a recognition of hierarchy, showing that one word is more important than another.

An old friend sent me a book called *the untethered soul*. I looked at the cover and there was a horse running by the ocean looking wonderfully free. Everyone's dream is to see a horse like that or to be like that, untethered; and the title had no capital letters. I didn't feel good about that book at all. I opened it up and I found out it was about a kind of spirituality which didn't necessarily include God! The devil wants us to believe that everybody is just like everybody else; there's no superior person. If we go on like this the name of Jesus will be written without a capital letter and there will be some church quoting lines from the Bible saying that He didn't put himself above anyone else. The few tiny incidents I saw, as a Muslim woman, are signs of a big heresy in Christianity; but I won't live long enough to worry about it.

Because of the prince of the air, I finally stopped leaving my apartment except to buy groceries. I'd "seen" him in churches and masjids... and on TV! So I sold my TV and got Shakespeare, a kitten that my dear cat loved.

Once, I saw a Muslim TV program: Children were looking in rapt attention. A sexy-looking man was singing beautifully like Michael Jackson, with Muslim women in tight clothes walking around. Although I didn't hear the words of the song, it was illustrated by a hadith about mercy: A modern sports shoe was put on the ground, to give water to a thirsty, emaciated-looking dog. The idea came from a hadith about a prostitute, who was saved because she took off her shoe, dipped it in a well, and gave water to a dog. The beauty of the sincere kindness in the hadith, was mixed with modern, woefully un-Islamic things: Those mixtures break down the discernment of children. They think they can grow up, dress, sing and manifest sexuality; but think everything is all right if they're kind. That is not an idea from any revelation: It's the false philosophy of humanism; and it is *no* way to get to heaven! Being kind leads nowhere without revelation, which requires piety. And the Arabic word for piety, *taqwa,* means God-fearing. Muslims must fear God, obey Him—not

look sexy or wear tight clothes. Actually one of the end time predictions is that there will be people who will be naked, but with clothes on: That's what was in that movie, and you see it every day in the West. In my 13 years in Pakistan, I only saw that kind of woman's undress once.

ISIS is the religion of the devil. Fanaticism is forbidden in Islam. People who believe in this kind of radical movement take one line out of the Quran, and exaggerate it to the wildest degree, creating a pseudo-religion which makes Islam look terrible. This is a good trick of the devil. The Prophet Muhammad pronounced a firm warning: "Never be extreme regarding religion. Many nations have been destroyed before you only because of extremism in religion." (Hadith in Nisaai; Ibn Majah).

Plain people

Being poor for thirty years after leaving the Tariqah, had many compensations, and it made me mellow. At Lakeview, I met some people who had sleazy characters, and were a nuisance; but I also met some dear people, who made my life outside my own apartment worthwhile. My best friend was a narrow-minded and prejudiced Southern Baptist named Catherine Coy, who wanted to loan me books, written by Christians and published by a Zionist publisher, supposedly comparing the truth in Christianity to the falsehood in Islam, equating Islam with ISIS, and interpreting words of Christ as being proofs against Islam. I ignored all that, and she finally calmed down. She didn't exactly learn enough from me or change; but we both loved God too much to dispute, and I'm pretty sure her prejudices broke down somewhere inside; but God knows best. She really taught me profound truths from the Bible too: I'm about to cry now—and the other teacher too, Paula. Catherine and I understood one another on profound interpretations of the Bible and I left her alone as far as teaching her Islam was concerned—partly because she was 92 years old! She was one of the Bible teachers, and her entire life had been spent practically alone with the Bible. I didn't tell her about the predictions of Moses and Jesus about the coming of Muhammad, because I knew that would be too much for her; and I'm not enough of a scholar to explain it well enough either. We loved one another so much, that nothing came between us.[85]

I loved many; but another was Kathy. Every line on her face was lovely and sweet, although she wasn't what you'd normally call a beauty. Moreover, half the time it seemed one side of her face was blue, or she'd have one black

85 Eight hundred years ago, St. Francis of Assisi set out on a Crusade to convert Muslims. After close calls with death, he met his match in a Muslim holy man, the Sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil, who could easily have killed St. Francis, but instead hoped to convert him to Islam. Soon, they forgot converting one another and spent a week talking about God. Then they embraced, and St. Francis left as a Christian, whereas the Sultan remained a Muslim.

eye—due to falling during attacks of epilepsy. When that wasn't bothering her, having had polio as a child would be tripping her up, or she'd be having an allergy to wheat or milk due to someone's mistake. Kathy's whole life was bound up on two levels: Faith in the Lord, and patching up whatever had bruised or broken last! She was often a trembling, bruised "package" of weakness and absolute faith. Kathy was not the kind of woman who takes to being hugged by other women; but near the time I left, she fell in my arms, weeping—while saying she was strong in faith although bruised and battered. I'll always love and admire Kathy: I want to see her with Jesus in Heaven... to embrace her there.

Clarence was the perfect husband; illiterate, but strong and decisive. He adored all his wives; but had seen his first and second into their graves, and was taking tender care of his third, who was nearing 80, and who had been dying of Parkinson's disease for the last ten years. Although he had the Lord's Prayer on his door, he was not someone you'd call pious; but he had a heart like warm honey. I hadn't known a single person as good in all my years in the Tariqah! Normally, I don't go around hugging men, no matter how old they are; but he was—does it exist?—a very minor kind of saint? God knows best. One of my eyes is shedding tears.

Then there was Tobie, a Japanese woman about 65, who was dying of cancer. She never complained: At worst she'd say she was as "sick as a wet cat;" but she took care of an autistic man, 80, who lived above her. He was sweet as pie, but about eight years old inside. She looked after him, but wisely—being sure he felt independent. Once when some of us were waiting for the bus, and she was gone, he confided in me, as a child would: "Tobie is *extra-ordinary*," he whispered. Unless there's been a miracle, Tobie has passed away, so I say a prayer for Tobie, *and* Richard, who is now a lonely child in his old age.

One who wasn't remarkable for his suffering, although he'd been through everything, was our good Maintenance Director, Jim. Things would happen, and our minds' paths would cross: Jim felt as if he'd been everywhere and seen everything. That made him free of prejudice, open-minded, intelligent and plain "wide:" I miss him and many! Trish, who cleaned our halls, was youngish, but like one of us; and Christine, the Manager of Lakeview Village Apartments, was one of those amazing things—a reasonable woman! In three days a week, Christine, Jim and Trish, had a big apartment complex full of old people, with emergencies, running smoothly. I couldn't help but compare those three good and competent people to the Muslims in charge at The Islamic Society of North America. Everything "flowed" so smoothly and easily at Lakeview—with kind human relations in difficult situations. The owners, were also fine: It was a lesson for me; but no fault of Islam at all—only a degeneration of a certain type.

A double personality

In my apartment building, there were two alcoholics; and just before I left, one named Lassie wanted me to be her friend, and help her with advice. I let her talk, and it sure sounded as if she had a double personality, or else her good side was named Lassie, and her bad side, or lower soul, she called Sassy. Fine, and forget psychology: It was clear that Sassy was no good. So naturally, I told her not to listen to Sassy, to get rid of her, and refuse to let her in, no matter what! And I went on while she kept on loving and appreciating me. You never know: If she was going to be Lassie, how could I refuse to be her friend? Around midnight, there was a knock on my door. When I opened it, there she was, stone drunk! I said, "Sassy: Go away," and I shut the door in her face. Neither one ever came back.

My Hindu sister

One of my new friends, who became a sister, is a young Hindu lady in India named Tamar. We both liked to post pictures of Hindu culture, especially on a special page where Ronda was the administrator, and on a page called The Wonders from India. Somehow, I had made the best collection of paintings of the child Krishna, so I posted those. Those pictures got Tamar and I to talking. She taught me some Telugu words; and was then overjoyed when I'd say "Good morning; how are you, little sister?" I was amazed at how amazed she was—treating me like a great person, just because I'd written down a few dozen phrases that *she* herself taught me! I'm a slow learner; but I've realized by age 80, that there aren't many people in the world, who are even *normally* interested in other people! When someone like Tamar gets used to that, then mild normality looks fantastic!

In India there are over 600 languages, all the races in the world, and people of every religion. Come to think of it, Harvard University and Geneva, Switzerland were like perfumes of the diversity found in India. There's great tolerance in India too, but in many places, the most dreadful prejudice too. There's everything there.

How big is God?[86]

I told my Muslim daughter in Pakistan about my Hindu sister in India. My tutti frutti said: "Why you have Hindu sister? Only Muslim brother and sister!" I got *really mad* at her and I have quite some temper; I can go on and on... and it's worse with her, because I love her so much, and because she's so

86 Muslims: In the last chapter of this book and in the Bibliography, you will see what Ibn Arabi says, and what the greatest scholars have said about the problem of religious "pluralism."

sweet when I lose my temper. Actually, when I get mad at her, I usually find out that she was right and I didn't know something. Well, I said, "How big do you think God is? How much mercy do you think God has? Do you think He only has mercy for Muslims, who are less than two billion people on earth, and the other four billion he's going to put in hell? How big do you think Allah is? Why do we say *Allahu akbar* (God is greatest)? Do you think He isn't great enough to notice that Hindus are the children of Adam and bleed red like you? Do you think that Joan of Arc will go to hell?" (My whole Pakistani family loved a movie about Joan of Arc, which they wore out). Then she said: "Thank you mama ji. I have best muther in world." (She is illiterate, but speaks many languages and learned to type a little English when I got her a smartphone).

PROOF

Chapter 29
A Diamond in the Dark

"Oh precious jewel: You glow, you shine;
I want you as a friend of mine!
Maude Murray

A friend in prison

While I was living in luxury, in my charming little apartment with its big oak tree, I was going back to all my old interests, including the Native American religions. So I visited a Sioux Indian page. There was a picture of a radiant-looking woman; and a policeman was advertising her, so to speak, saying that she was a Sioux woman, named Louise, who had been imprisoned due to prejudice. She was very depressed at the moment, and all he wanted was someone to write to her.

I had nothing to do, and love to inspire people with enthusiasm, so I thought why not? I felt capable of inspiring a prisoner enough to help her keep her strength of spirit till she gets out. I loved the fact that she was a wrongfully accused Sioux Indian too.

First I got to know the policeman slightly, and understood that he had been responsible for her case some 20 years before. She had been framed by one of her own sons and someone else; it was a dreadful, complicated story.

I started writing to her and learned a little about the Sioux Indian rites, which she was allowed to practise even in the prison. Actually, she was only one quarter Sioux, I found out. After some time, I also learned that the policeman was not at all the policeman who had been responsible for her case. He

was a retired law enforcement officer living in the United Kingdom. He had never even met her; but had been writing to her for 20 years and was in love with her. (She was *not* a Sioux Indian either, and Louise is not her name: I am masking her: She could be executed if I talk frankly: You'll see why later).

I wrote, and she wrote me back: Sweet little letters, pious and good, pretty simple. She practised *both* Christianity and her Native American religion. (That's a phenomenon that often happens with Native Americans: They love their own religions; but cannot resist Jesus Christ, and it seems to be a permitted combination, but God knows best. Normally, one can learn about other religions; but one must never mix them). I thought she was perfect, so I adopted her as my sister. I never sent her money: I didn't have any; but time went on and I also became better friends with the man who loved her. He had also been a flyer of a certain kind of airplane I've never heard of: There are airplanes that don't take off on a runway; they just go straight up in the air!

There was only one thing the matter with that man: He was an atheist, and had a soul like lead. Sometimes an ugly side would come out; but I put up with him, because she said he had promised her that he would go to church and change when she got out. They were hoping she'd get out soon, because they thought that all she needed was a great lawyer (Those cost $30,000). He was trying to find her that lawyer, and he was wealthy—always sending her lots of money for every single thing. At the time, I had no idea; but every inmate claims he's innocent until he dies; and they all think they could get out if they had a $30,000 lawyer.

Well, after a while, she and he both recommended I write to a friend of hers too: That friend (really was) named Tracey. They said Tracey was a very good, honest, down-to-earth, forthright, frank woman and I'd love her. Would I include her? "Sure!" I've got room for everybody in my heart and the ink in my pen never runs dry. So, I started writing to Tracey too. Then everything got hot! Those two ladies told different stories! One of them described the place where they lived as being a beautiful country town; whereas the other said it was so dangerous that no one could even visit there unless he could handle a gun! I'd actually thought of living near Tracey there, because I'm really close to her in heart; but the policeman had been warned by Louise not to live anywhere near the prison—to stay where he was in England.

One of those girls (well they were in their forties or fifties) was lying; and I wasn't absolutely sure which one; but I was almost sure it was Louise. Ronda, my friend who could read auras, *had* thought Louise was radiant and simple, straight, and innocent; but both she and I had something to learn. Now, when you see a person walking down the street, or somebody comes to tea in your apartment, they may be radiant, charming and adorable. But you go home with them; live with them, and find out that they're hell on earth. It's the same with auras: A gifted person takes a glance and sees what we all see. It takes

Ronda an hour or more, and much psychic energy, to go through all the *layers* of an aura. Some people have defensive walls too, or they're tricky, and Ronda can be subjective and stop using her "science." Well, Louise gave the impression of being simple and radiant—not only to me in letters, but also to Ronda when she first glanced at her aura.

I didn't want to be friends with an evil woman, nor would I abandon someone good, who was living in a hell on earth after repenting. Tracey was so frank and fresh in everything she said, that she was irreplaceable in my life; but I'd adopted Louise as my sister; and her letters, although they were all practically the same, sounded simple and pious, about her going to church and learning little things and having little ideas which she lived by.

Things got much worse: not only had I realized that one of them was lying, but the two had a big falling out, and the man in England said it was all the fault of Tracey, and that one couldn't believe a word she said. He had recommended her wholeheartedly a few months before; and I've been fooled about many people; but there's a certain type of person one can't be wrong about. Even as I write, my heart bears witness: Tracey is a diamond. I found her in a dark place, shining. God saw her commit a terrible crime; He saw her go to prison and repent. For me she's become a treasure; and I know our Lord will reward her once she's been thoroughly purified.

Louise said Tracey had stolen money from the chapel to pay some of her fellow prisoners to do her laundry for her, because she was too lazy. I thought, impossible! Tracey jogs every day to stay healthy! And I began to think: Louise had said it was dangerous around the prison, because she did not want her English friend to move near her: He would soon find out about her lies; and he was sending her lots of money every month, based on her stories about what was needed to make life a little easier.

I still couldn't just throw Louise away on the basis of her aura, without being *certain*: I had to know the facts. So I wrote to Tracey and to Louise, asking for their sides of what actually happened. "I've been told that you've stolen money from the chapel and you've done this and you've done that. What's the truth of the matter?"

So, lo and behold, I got the truth out of Tracey: No one could pay anyone to do their laundry; she hadn't stolen anything; but Louise had hidden a garment in the chapel, against the rules and tried to get it blamed on Tracey, her best friend; but it wasn't Tracey's size: Only Louise wore that size. (I'm not sure, but I think this was a garment one could possibly escape in, and those were kept in very restricted areas, and were only for visits by family). I also got letters from three good ladies in the prison. I'm going to show you extracts from them in case anybody is curious to know what people in a prison are like.

Well, I know now that most people in prisons are horrible; they're evil; and it's hell on earth to live in there; but if you repent and you've been punished

enough, and you have to stay in there more than 10 years, then it's almost inevitable that you'll come out with post-traumatic stress syndrome. When Tracey gets out, she will have had more than twenty years, so I don't know what I'm going to see; but I adore her and she seems perfectly normal to the Chaplain. She's extremely pious: He calls her his "good fruit" and a "prayer warrior." I'm proud to know her, and I love her too much to write about it!

Soon I had letters from three different prisoners. One was amazingly intelligent. She was uneducated but smart as a whip, and wrote in a legal jargon which was too cute for words. Those three women, out of six hundred and fifty, seemed to be the only ones in there who were worth being friends with. Later, Tracey told me that most of the women were so tricky and evil that she often just put her head in her hands and wept.

All three women told me the same thing, in different words; and my heart melted for them all. If I were the Governor of Texas, I'd let them out—all three, plus Tracey of course. There *must* be punishment and justice; but somewhere there has to be a place in our hearts for people who have repented, and who are basically good. You'll see, and you can tell as well as I can: These letters were written by women born in poor homes. They have had little education; but they're all smart and strong—ready to stand up for justice when someone good is wronged. There was no possible "ulterior motive" for their going to the trouble to stand up for Tracey or protect me from Louise. As an outsider, who had never known evil, I could get in lots of trouble: They knew that. Remember how I've told you that I want to know all about people, and I often think I've seen everything? Well, I hadn't seen evil yet: God willed that I should see and know evil people too, and injustice—and shining hearts in dark places.

What happened was that Louise had invented a story to blame her own best friend. She had been lying to people for twenty years and everybody knew it except Tracey and me. We both still believed in her and thought she'd repented and was basically good. What I did not know, and Tracey did, was that Louise was *not* framed for a crime she hadn't committed, due to her Sioux Indian ancestry: She had told Tracey that she murdered a man, cut his body up, and put the parts in various places to hide them. Motive: Money! Still, Tracey thought Louise had repented and changed the way she had. She was heartbroken when *both* her supposed best friend, *and* the "policeman" slandered her. There are *very few* good people in prisons or around them; but when a person repents, he is like the man lying by the side of the road, wounded, in the parable of the good Samaritan (Bible, Luke 10:25–37). That person needs a friend, and nearly everyone is going to pass him by.

Even after Louise tried to destroy her reputation, Tracey was praying for Louise every night, while I was keeping Louise as my sister. I thought, if she goes to Hell, I'll just have a sister in Hell, because I'm faithful. I've never unsistered anybody in my life; and I've had several sisters, who left me; well, two

died, may God have mercy on them. Then, realizing that I was being moralistic and not virtuous in saying I'd have a sister in Hell, I decided to forget Louise, so I told Tracey: "Look, I need another sister. Would you like to be my sister?" If by any wild chance Louise repented on her deathbed, of course I'd stand by her side; I'd stand by the side of *anybody* who repents, but she was really an experience in my life: I had never seen evil before and she'd been evil for about 30 years. Oh dear: She stood up in the Chapel and announced that she was giving her heart to Jesus; but she didn't stand up and admit she was guilty of her crime. Tracey stood up in the Chapel, with 72 people present, and said she was guilty, whereas nearly all prisoners claim innocence—hoping for a good lawyer. Louise had also been lying and tricking that Englishman, who was sending her a fortune each month; and who thought he couldn't come to live near her because the prison was in a war zone. *He* thought I was what's called "a prison virgin;" but no: He was!

The three treasures

My heart was warmed by these letters from the three repentant women, none of whom was well-enough educated to even address a letter: Their efforts were full of mis-spellings, odd abbreviations and a few words I'd never use; but they all wanted to stand up to defend Tracey, and denounce lying, trickery and revenge. Tracey had said something that made Louise try to utterly destroy her: I forget what, and all this has been long forgotten, but it was quite some adventure for me.

Being anxious to know my new friend better, I asked her about her crime: Why, how, where and when exactly. I just wanted to get the facts straight, because I knew people would be asking me why I wrote to her. (Actually, I'd told several people I was writing to someone in prison: The unanimous reaction was dead silence). Then I got a letter from her which is beside me now, with the three letters from other inmates. Her reply to my questions was so heart-rending, that I've never been able to read it again. She was hurt to be asked again, and scared that she would lose me, along with the many people who had never spoken to her again. She told me how she'd wept for decades, begging forgiveness of Jesus; how she hadn't even been able to see herself in the mirror, how scared she'd been at the time, so she had lied and made everything worse.

For the first time in my life, I saw what repentance was, and I remembered things from the Bible and the Quran about humility and poverty—realizing that repentance brought one into a lovely state of soul—a state of humility, or nothingness before God and man. Unable to look at it again though, I put the letter back in its envelope. In big red letters, I wrote "Precious repentance" on it, and decided to keep it forever.

Actually, in other letters, I'd read that she had fallen madly in love with a man who drank heavily and was rather abusive; but she had thought she could save him. This is a classic story: Most of us know someone like her. Every single person she knew had told her to leave him; but she was full of hope and kept trying. He had become worse and worse, abusing alcohol and abusing her, using up everything she'd earned as he piled up debts; but I am *not* saying anyone has a right to kill anyone: I've told her she's guilty, and she knows it perfectly well. I *am* saying that she had gone far astray, was in terrible company and abused. In some states one receives a lighter sentence if one has been abused by someone; but not in Texas. She was sentenced to forty years, reduced to twenty.

After reading that she was sometimes on the brink of despair, I told her about the Jesus Prayer, thinking that it was unlikely to mean much to her; but I was preparing her.[87] Later, I'd figure out how to send her the book, called *The Way of a Pilgrim*.

When her next letter came, she told me she'd started saying it on the spot! Now that prayer: "Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner," is practised by Christians, nearly all over the world. I had had the idea that it was only for Russian Orthodox Christians; but it is taught with the most profound doctrines in the Greek and Romanian Orthodox Churches, in Catholicism, in the Methodist Church, and many others. It is so profound that I'm quite incapable of explaining it; but there is a lovely little book about it: *The Way of a Pilgrim*. That's still beside my bed, and it's the precious gift that Seyyed Hossein Nasr had given me when he left Harvard to return to Iran. Well, it took me months to figure out how to send Tracey that book, but I managed. She hasn't at all my way of talking; but I knew I'd soon get a letter in *her* kind of English. I got a letter that started with the word *"Wow!"* Then she said that that was a *real* book, the best she'd ever read, and she was *happy!*

In her letters, I learned too much about life in there, the people, the despair... and the feeling people had of being punished over and over again endlessly. Well, you know a reasonable punishment for murder is death (not so)? When that penalty is not given, due to mercy, many are grateful. She changed her attitude and accepted everything; but many in her family hadn't spoken to her for a decade. She wrote to them, humbly asking them to forgive her, and making a full confession. Then guess what? Everyone forgave her, and she had a family again, because she took charge of her life, unlike most criminals: She said, "I am guilty; I have wept, repented and changed; please forgive me!"

She told me about another inmate, who wanted sympathy (and money? I didn't ask) because her mother had just died. Tracey was sympathetic. A few months later, that woman's mother died again! The inmates were low—liars,

87 Muslims: I cannot talk much about this prayer without help from great Gnostics; I will not say a word against the Quran or the Sunnah, but can't always know what to say.

mean, ugly and plain evil. for the most part; but she described a few who were contrite, and just longing to go home before they died. She told me about illnesses, that weren't treated well, or which scared people half to death, not enough food, temperature over 100°, almost no fresh food, not enough money to spend on repairs, guards who were bribed right 'n left. Actually, she rarely told me any of these things: She didn't want me to suffer from them; but I gleaned little bits through the years, and some were in the three letters from other inmates.

Tracey helps those who are old, blind or disabled, because they have times when they have to move their cots out of the dorms on their backs for "lock-outs." She runs to stay healthy, and tries to make *me* happy by sending adorable little cards that prisoners can get in the commissary.

Why does anyone go into dark places?

Jesus tells the parable of The Good Samaritan, in which no passerby, would pay the least attention to a man, who had been beaten up and was lying by the side of the road. You see from my experience: No one I knew would approve of even *writing* to anyone in prison, so if anyone in there were to be repentant and good, he would have no scrap of mercy till he died in there, or maybe got out after decades, warped and mentally ill or gravely disturbed. No one should change to walking on the other side of the road.

Prisoners' letters

These are three of the most contrite and honest prisoners, in a high security Texas prison. The fact that they are there, shows that they have committed extremely serious crimes—some are in there for murder, others are guilty of great fraud schemes. I don't want to make Tracey tell me about the ones who are still evil, as she tries to spare me and her parents from hearing the horrible things in there; but I'll quote three, who took the trouble to stand up for justice, when Tracey was framed.

One reason I find these letters so interesting, is that the women had no reason to say a word, except to be just and good. If I were "in charge," I would try to get people like these out on parole, *after being sure* they had enough training to earn a livelihood. What would you do? And note that these women are not in the category of those who might be released due to current prison reform: Their crimes were severe, but they have changed; there's no human being who can buck any "system" these days.

Keeping one of these women in prison costs about $60,000 per year, and all that's needed is some human skill. Very few people are competent to evaluate character these days, so systems and laws, red tape, are tying the country's

budget up. Many times in this book, you'll see incredible waste, injustice and tragedies, because no one could or would, sort out the good people and reward, pay or free *them* instead of others. I learned the hard way, that many people in prison are plain evil; but I wish I were there to help others to be forgiven after decades of repentance.

Notice in here too, how uneducated these women are, and yet intelligent; they've learned from a few legal documents, can't even spell my name, or sign "Sincerely!" They need a modicum of education to get out of the lowest groups or gangs in crime-ridden places. One sees good hearts—obviously after dreadful crimes and tragic punishment. They are all crisp, frank, factual. Oh, I have so much to say; but listen to *them* talk. I love these women: Allahumma, oh Lord of Islam: Have mercy upon repentant, good souls, everywhere!

Meet Donna first. She's been in there for about thirty years. It seems that has cost us roughly $1,800,000. Tracey says she's extremely contrite, and is only longing to go home before she dies. She stands right up and talks straight, to clear Tracey from Louise's "framing operation."

> Maude, my name is Donna and I have known "Louise" a very, very, very long time. I know for a fact that she can be very cunning and vicious in her dealings with someone *she* thinks is below her, or who hurt her feelings in some way... (She) stole clothes, brushes and other inconsequential items... to include Tracey. (She means to implicate Tracey)... if you all would call the Warden and the Disciplinary Captain and ask them point blank... their eye is on "Louise"... she is guilty. Everyone knows she lies.
>
> Donna

This one, from Latoia, is too long to quote, because she's extremely intelligent. (She got out, praise the Lord)! It's full of every detail—proving that each sentence "Louise" had written to me was a lie. Louise had intended to make me believe only her, and blame Tracey, who was her "best friend for life," until I started noticing that one of them was lying.

> Hello Mrs. Maude,
>
> I hope that my letter finds you in great health & spirit. I've since tried to chill out n leave well enough alone. But I'm so tired of "Louise" trying to make my friend look like the bad guy. I used to go out and water (plants) with this woman thinking she was the sweet old lady type of woman. But let me tell you this. She is a evil liar and a demon. I have a lot to say but will retain it and only speak on this current issue. "Louise" is a liar and she did do that... and yes she blamed Tracey to which would never do such a thing. Tracey did not nor would she ever steal anything that is a fact. Tracey has good character reputation unlike

> "Louise." That I am ever writing this shows she has lied yet again on someone or to someone.
>
> Barbara

See how her English comes from legal documents! Who in the world uses the words "to which?" This precious woman is uneducated, but smart as a whip: She has picked up her vocabulary from some legal report; but she doesn't even know how to say, "Dear Maudie," or "Dear Ms. Murray."

Then here's a glimpse of Tracey:

> No one can take God away from me so I stay focused on Him. He put me here for a reason & together Him and I will figure that out. I love God so much & He won't leave me no matter how hard it is in here... I'm making a home in my heart to get away from whats around me. *Do not worry*... I will not fall again, lie again, collapse, forget to pray... I may fall in my bunk at night & cry my eyes out but nobody sees that just me and God and by morning He has me up and straighten out again. I thought I was losing a dear friend (me) again... and take care of yourself for me please cause I want to spend time with you when I get out... I'm being good don't worry Maudie-puss-kitty... love you so much.
>
> Tracey

(For seven months, I was traveling, and complications separated us. I told her I love her to death. Want proof? I nearly died)! There was no way for either of us to find the other!

Postscript: Louise was transferred to a prison that was rougher, as was the custom when someone caused too much trouble. The Warden told Tracey to go on being good as she had always been. As for me, I found a diamond in the dark, and I'm going to treasure her, lifelong. I really love that precious sister, and my heart has learned what repentance can do. Now Tracey is saying the Jesus Prayer there, while I am saying the Shahadah here. Our religions are apparently different, but essentially the same, and we love one another as if we'd been brought up together under the same roof. Although she has had little education, and her English is not the Queen's, Tracey is intelligent and good. She will be my sister forever.

How to make money

I was feeling wealthy, with a lovely apartment, an enormous oak tree outside and bouquets of flowers all around. Actually I was poor, but felt rich due to all the beauty around me. So I was sending money to my daughter in Pakistan and doing what I could for whoever was sick, sad or sorely burdened

by poverty. That wasn't easy and I always had to sacrifice something; but an ideal of mine is the sieve: Nearly all you put into it, goes through with hardly any fight.

Well we had a vestibule with mailboxes for each of our apartments on one side; on the other side was the box for outgoing mail. One morning, I mailed a check for a hundred dollars to someone who needed it. I mailed it in the outbox on one side of that lobby. In the afternoon, I picked up my mail: There was a check for $250—an unexpected present for me, in my mailbox, on the other side! In Pakistan, I had an inscription on my wall: وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ ۚ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا "And whoever fears Allah—He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah—then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a (decreed) extent."

Lifelong, I've had all I needed, usually with a few luxuries too, while others were scrimping and saving, dreaming of coupons in the mail or sales at stores going out of business. There *have* been nervous moments; but I can see clearly that God does take care of those who help others, and it is certain that one must give away a part of what one has—whether one is rich or poor. Every revelation makes that clear as a bell.

Only for the love of Allah, by night and by day

Nearly all the time while I was at Lakeview, I was enjoying the world, traveling, playing with ideas and dancing in the "colors of life." You think that people who give up the world don't like it? Not me! *Everything* is fascinating. I'd love to know every single thing about it: It's a wonderful world!

There's a movie, called *Lili*, which is based on the novel, *The Love of Seven Dolls* by Paul Gallico. In it, a naïve young lady falls in love with seven puppets in a circus; and she believes they are real. Each day she goes to talk to them, while crowds gather behind her—delighted by the innocent charm of each day's scene.

However, she detests the puppeteer, who was once a great dancer. Due to an accident, he has a limp, and is bitter about his destiny. He is paying Lili to come by each day and talk to his puppets, just because she is making him rich; but she cannot abide him. Well, one day she revolts against his cynicism, and runs away from him and from the circus.

She is walking along a road, when she has a vision of "Carrot-top," one of the puppets she loves. He is life size; and she's quite delighted to see him. They dance, until... he turns into the puppeteer! Shocked, she goes on until she has a vision of Foxy. They then dance; but he too turns into the puppeteer! Finally,

having danced with them all, Lili realizes that the puppets are qualities of the puppeteer! So she runs back to the circus and into his arms!

What I mean to say about loving the world, is that, yes! It is delightful; but it only illustrates some of the qualities of He who made it. It's also a kind of dream: It will disappear at the end of the night, when nothing will be left but God.

Towards the end of my luxury at Lakeview, and just when I had given up on finding a spiritual path, I met someone, who would lead me out of the United States, and across the world *again*—at age 80! But the important thing would not be a move in space: My new friend led me to a spiritual path. I was about to find the Truth, after over 60 years of searching, sinning and going astray.

PROOF

PROOF

Chapter 30
The End of an Old Life

"First of all, to thine own self be true; and it must follow as the night the day. Thou can't not then be false to any man."

William Shakespeare

Telling the truth and being real

At each stage in life, whether rich or poor, well-loved or in disgrace, I was trying to be a real person. When one doesn't have much guidance, that boils down to trusting in God, and trying to follow one's conscience: There's no outside guide to correct one—only that inside inclination to be true to; and life is so arranged that it's harder to be sincere, when one has all one's needs and wants.

Thank goodness, I'd experience both hardship and ease, because I was dying to know myself, in order to know God and other people. Far be it from me to be saying "Who am I?" and reach the Truth that we are... well, somehow divine. That is an *extremely* problematic idea these days when practically everyone is plain self-centered and interested in nothing but themselves. All I mean by knowing myself is that I wanted to see how lax and decrepit I could be in luxury, and how weak when tested with adversity. I often fell or failed, did stupid things, dreamt up false theories, or got stymied; but kept learning. Even though we have a conscience, everyone who wants a purely spiritual life, needs a guide, and there were only half-baked ones in sight wherever I'd turn.

Now, at the end of a lifetime, I see that there are endless layers in spirituality, and in us people too. Being true to oneself is *not* easy, and finding the

Truth isn't either. The world is full of an unreal kind of spirituality, based on psychology and humanism—having little to do with the Spirit. To give you an idea of how rare real people and ideas are these days, look at objects—around you, outside, at work, anywhere. Very few objects are made of real materials like water, air, stone, wood or natural anything: They're mostly fabricated by machines and chemicals. That's not all necessarily bad on the material plane; but it's a reflection of what has happened inside us, and in our ideas.

Well, I had moved to Lakeview Village, where I would live for several years, in a modest, but lovely apartment. Life was so easy as to seem heavenly again, and I'd decided never to leave. My work of reform seemed finished by then, and I'd kept looking for a real spiritual guide, but was losing interest—and all the more so in that life was so comfortable and easy. As often, I thought I knew God's Will: My living there was a gift from above, and a compensation for all I'd been through. I thought I was a martyr too. In Islam, that means that all your sins are on the head of the one who killed you; you die as easily as pricked by a pin, and live in heaven right away. That idea made me conscience-free; and that is a terrible thing. I had no idea something was wrong with me, but kept asking questions, so I ended up realizing that there I was, in a new error I'd never heard of! One must believe in mercy, but never lose one's fear of God.

I met more spiritual geniuses online, and I'd thought one or another would lead me somewhere; but I always ended up feeling as if I'd fallen over a cliff. I'd think someone was a guide, or that he or she could could lead me to one, and then I'd find poor character or too little knowledge of Islam, or some weird, modern ideas... or the most awful cartoons, and jokes too ugly for words.

All I'd been through had done no harm at all. I was only curious to know how I could have met so many geniuses who were lacking something essential, and why I'd met so many misguided people. Here's a simplified version of what someone finally told me:

> "Existence is complex, open to all sorts of possibilities, and the spiritual dimension is no exception. Among the seekers of spiritual paths we find different types and qualifications, all of which are dependent on the essential predisposition (*isti'dâd* in Arabic) of each one. In this age, at the end of the Kali-Yuga (near the end of the world), high qualifications are lacking. To the lack of high qualifications corresponds a lack of pure intentions, and consequently, looking around, we see a quantity of pseudo-disciples who meet pseudo-masters. All the rest is nothing but the result of this situation, with various degrees of realization or deviation."

Well, one day, when I was feeling as planted and immobile as my well-established, old oak tree, I was casually looking at Facebook sites, when I noticed a photograph of Frithjof Schuon standing next to René Guénon on top of a "page." Now it is true that they once seemed to think alike and stood together in several photographs; but Guénon soon understood his former friend and

denounced his errors in letters I had on my site.[88] Showing that picture, without explaining it, was a misleading, and *very* bad thing to do. Actually, the picture gives the devil himself free reign. One man was a great heretic and the other a great saint: If someone didn't know the difference, he could never be a real Muslim, Sufi, philosopher, or thinker, period. More young people could get into the wrong group and lose their souls, lives, children, health and wealth.

So to do my duty, I spent hours commenting on that page—correcting people and telling them that they should read what I had to say, because I had been the third wife of Frithjof Schuon, and I really knew what I was talking about. Various people entered into conversations with me there—hardly believing I was who I said I was, or, as usual, thinking I was some rejected woman out for revenge, and unworthy of any credibility.

After a while I got in a pickle: There was a doctrine I didn't know a thing about and someone had stepped in to contradict me. That was pretty bad for my trying to help them all. That "someone" knew more than I did in a way; but I knew I was fundamentally right. As usual, I was in a bind, because I'm not at all a genius like the people I've always wanted to associate with. So I had to say, "Sorry, you know more than I do. I still think I'm right for another reason; but I have no idea how to continue our discussion." Then another man came in. His name was Abu Balqees, and he plastered that fellow from A to Z, saying I was right, due to several high falutin doctrines I'd never heard of. (Then the other man won over Abu Balqees; but Abu Balqees replied superbly, and won on all counts)! So I was glad and went to sleep; but first, I sent a note to that Abu Balqees. He knew more about Islam and Tasawwuf, than anyone I'd met so far in my whole life! He also showed aadaab that day: Delicate, Islamic good manners. I told him I'd like to be his friend.

Soon I had another adopted son. Abu Balqees and I got along like two birds on a branch: We thought alike and I found him to be quite like a relative of mine. Since he was 31 and I was about 80, he asked if he could be my adopted son, and I was glad to add him to my family. He is an American, who lived too far for me to meet him in person; but we talked heart-to-heart online. He had only graduated from High School when he had to start earning a living, so he earned little; but from childhood he'd been rich in knowledge—first reading about all religions until deciding to become a Muslim, then being devoted to Tasawwuf,[89] and particularly to the Tijanis of Senegal. Near him lived a community of Senegalese he was extremely fond of—and somehow

88 frithjofschuon.wordpress.com... or see Appendix II: Letters From René Guénon Concerning Frithjof Schuon.

89 We prefer the word Tasawwuf, only because there have been so many false Sufi movements. There's actually no real difference between Tasawwuf and Sufism, except that the first is Arabic and the second English.

we discovered that we shared a deep, special love for the African race. Albeit Abu Balqees knew he had saintly Muslim friends; he told me that his favorite man was a "Senegalese beanpole." He said that, because his friend was thin as a rail—eating little, and praying much of the night. That scared the living daylights out of me, because asceticism is *not* my cup of tea. For one thing, I'm weak and incapable. For another, I thrive on another way of being: When I see flowers, or anything pretty, I praise God.

When I told my new son that I was losing hope of finding a true Shaykh, he told me that in such cases one should take Muhammad himself as a master; and he told me why, who said so, and that it was certain. That was like a revelation for me: It meant I could have a real spiritual life, even if I couldn't find a real Shaykh! He also advised me to write to a certain man, saying that he was the most learned and intelligent person he'd ever corresponded with. Now I knew Abu Balqees by then, and I had tremendous respect for Him; so I wrote to that man, having no idea who he really was. I doubt Abu Balqees knew either; or if he did, he was going to let me find out for myself. I wrote frankly, saying that I was looking for a true spiritual master. Of course, I also told him who I was and summarized my troubled life, my sins... and you know all the rest.

Sometimes I think I'm so smart about people, that I can hear the grass grow, and I can hear what it's saying too. And I can hear what different kinds of people will say about this next part; and that could cause the howling of the wind in the moors of Scotland! One problem will be the particular Tariqah I found: What can I say? It will be hard for some to accept: I understand why; but you'll believe and be absolutely convinced by what persuaded me, or you won't. Sri Ramana Maharshi said: "Whatever is not destined to happen will not happen, try as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it..." You'll see: The worst obstacles became nothing for me. But if you were meant for another religion, or another way, you'll find that. I'm praying that at least one atheist will believe, that some one person will have less prejudice against Islam and that someone will realize that Tasawwuf is full of wisdom, whatever Tariqah is for him.[90]

Many people reject Prophets, saints and their neighbors too, because those who really are greater, say "I'm better than you." Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life;" Muhammad said, "He who has seen me, has seen the Truth," and Jesus said, "...a greater than Jonah is here," and the greatest saints have said something about their own greatness that sounds beyond anything proud; but their words are full of meaning. The Shaykh at-Tijani is reproached for saying the same thing Abdul Qadir al-Jilani said, and for talking about

90 There are the most delicate "rules" for good manners regarding saints, and Prophets too—way beyond the crude ideas I'm presenting to you. See, for example: *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab*, Edited by Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Luca Patrizi.

honors the Prophet told him to announce. But when one has been told to speak, one does; if one has *everything* to teach, one says, "It is best to stay with me." The rest, dear people, is up to you; and the guidance, oh our Lord, is up to Thee!

Sometimes, anyone may say "I know better than you!" Once we know who God is and that we are nothing, the psychological issue of pride is extinct. A Gnostic saint, unrecognized even in his own family, told me about that, because I was surprised. He knew he was a great Shaykh for teaching, and told me so privately. He had also just taught me that we are all nothing, and then paid me compliments, so I was astonished! (Actually, I was asking tiny questions; then he'd open doors. I'd go through those, with him pointing at other questions, so I'd ask those. He would reply to those too, and conclude by saying I asked the most excellent questions! The whole thing was delightful! My ego didn't care anymore; but there was some spiritual charm in it that made me laugh out loud)!

Next: People who believe that the Truth can be found by the mind, could be confused in their minds. Those willing to listen to one of the greatest Gnostics of all time, may be able to find a higher dimension in knowledge: Sri Ramana Maharshi said, "When there are thoughts, there is distraction: when there are no thoughts, there is meditation." You can recognize the Truth: It does not come from the mind or study, and it's *eternal*: "Thus has it always been, and thus shall it ever be." (Latin: *Sic semper erat, et sic semper erit*).

So you *can* think about it, and *read* about it; but what's hard is to find a path, a Tariqah (That means a *narrow* path in Arabic—more narrow than a *sirat*, a path). I was always looking for a *way* to *realize* the Truth. For a *way*, you need a *person*, not any person, but a *real person*, who is an appointed guide and there aren't many. The kind of knowledge I've always wanted cannot be learned. In fact, it can only be transmitted through saints whose knowledge comes from the Prophet.

Now I remind you: I had already met several people who had *some degree* of some kind of realization; but something was obviously wrong with their characters, their knowledge of revelation, or their level of development. I'd been puzzled life-long.

And what about being a nice person, loving everybody, adopting orphans, doing good works? They're all wonderful; but Sri Ramana Maharshi said that the *best* service one can offer to humanity, is to become a realized person. As for reform: That's a bit different. If you see something that really needs correcting, then reform has fallen to your lot. If you see someone lying wounded by the side of the road, he falls to your lot too. It was not for some particular period of time that Jesus told The Parable of the Good Samaritan: That holds true forever.

Now below here, in the chapter called La Vita Nova (and only less so in the whole book) you read about one person's, private spiritual life. That is usually kept secret; but for all the world I can't see how to do what seems good for you, without reducing that reticence to expose my private life. Almost word-for-word you will come with me towards that different kind of knowledge—the kind that does not come from reading or any amount of learning from educated people. It is spiritual knowledge, only conveyed by grace. You will see that I found a Tariqah that I adore, and I tell you why I find it best; but the metaphysics in Tasawwuf, applies to any Tariqah, because it's just plain true. I mean when you read me say what exists and doesn't, why and how; why we can love one another; what makes God give you knowledge... all that applies to all Turuq everywhere. It actually applies to all religions too; but that's quite hard to fathom, and, as the last revelation, Islam includes all that preceded it.

Now of course, I'm a particular type, and not the type I love. You see most people are of a nature meant for love; many less are made for knowledge. A crazy thing about me is that I think I'm a love-type (*bhakta*, in Sanskrit); but what I've always loved is *knowledge* (*jnani*, in Sanskrit)! So lifelong, you've seen me stumble along, falling in love with anyone who had knowledge, but without understanding much. Finally, in old age, I got a hold of the bare necessities; and I think it's by destiny that you should learn from someone who had as hard a time as me. Very few people are of the knowledge-type; and I assure you: Many of them are hard to understand!

A final introductory word: Tasawwuf, or Sufism, is the inner, esoteric (secret) essence of Islam. Much knowledge of it is commonly available; but part is not. I don't know *all* the reasons why; but part of the reason is that people wouldn't believe or understand some things, and they'd argue, causing trouble.

I think part of the reason for not understanding is that one can't even recognize some aspects of truth unless one gives up the world. *However,* I think it is possible *not* to give up the world for a long time, because if you are pious enough, God will teach you, and I'm pretty sure the world will just go away; but God knows best. That's assuming real piety, God-fearing—the kind that makes you afraid to disobey. What makes me think that's the case, is a line in the Quran: "Fear God (have real piety; taqwa in Arabic) and then He will teach you."

Chapter 31
La Vita Nova

"In the book of my memory, the part before which little is worth remembering—there is the heading Incipit vita nuova: Here begins a new life. That was the day I met you."

Dante Alighieri, La Vita Nova

Struck by love, as if by lightning!

An answer came from the man Abu Balqees had recommended, and I was thunderstruck: That man was obviously telling me about "an unsurpassable spiritual master"! It was not himself at all, but the Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani, who died in 1815! I had found exactly the man I thought I'd found before: The true guide, after decades of going astray in following Frithjof Schuon, who my great professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, had called "an unsurpassable spiritual master"! I recognized the Truth in each word I was told.

The writer described his own role too: That was equally astonishing! And he mentioned other people, some women included, who I found out were quite like the writer—exactly the kind of people I thought I'd found over 60 years before! Why was I astonished by the writer too? That man who wrote to me was "the man who wasn't there." And he explained that a guide can only be a guide if he is a transparent veil through which one sees Muhammad. Instead of being a Shaykh, he said he was only a Muqaddam, and in his Tariqah—the Tariqah Tijaniyyah—there was only one Shaykh, Ahmad at-Tijani.[91]

91 Dear people (those are you): A true spiritual path is really full of secrets. One cannot talk about everything; but I love people. I can tell you one secret: There is nothing in the cosmos greater than a human being,

It was embarrassing: I fell in love with the Muqaddam who wrote to me; but *later*, I'd fall in love with *several* Muqaddams I'd never even seen... and some had died long before! The idea of a transparent veil, a mirror or an open door was too captivating. It was not only the *role* of being a true guide on the spiritual path, although that was essential—I also fell in love with the human nature of truly spiritual people.

This is why I'm always in love—not only with the Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani, who has my heart in his hands; but also with the living and dead saints I've come across. The trim and decoration around a door symbolise the human beauty of a Gnostic saint, because a true guide is an open door to knowledge of Allah and the Prophet. This is what I wrote when I first realized that I'd found a real person, the first Muqaddam who wrote to me:

> "Once I saw a door and fell madly in love: That was because the door was open. Nothing was in the way, and Allah, His Messenger and the sun of Gnosis were all on the other side! There were other doors visible in there too: The whole sight was breathtaking, so guess what? I died of love for the door, and for the sight of its being open, and for the view upon all I had ever wanted: What was *inside* the door!
>
> I can hear through my door too: The Sound of Heavenly Choirs; and letters are passed through there, by angels—all employed to teach, not only me, but anyone who knocks... to teach لآ اله إلا الله محمد رسول الله."[92]

The writer's self-effacement bowled me over: Lifelong, I'd never seen real self-effacement before. All living Muqaddams were only disciples of the one Shaykh, he wrote; and that Tariqah was Hanifiyyan, Ibrahimian, Ahmadian and Muhammadian. If you're a Muslim, you'll realize what those adjectives implied for me. If you are a Jew or a Christian, I can say that we all descend from Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic)—literally—both physically and spiritually: Moses, Jesus and Muhammad were "children" of Abraham.

He went on to say that, given all my past life, his Tariqah Tijaniyyah would be too disciplined and strange for me, so he recommended I enter a certain branch of the Shadhiliah Tariqah, where there was a Shaykh who understood all the errors I'd come out of. When I got to that part, I died deader than death.

I was absolutely in love with every word about the Tariqah Tijaniyyah, its Shaykh no longer on earth, its doctrines, that man who wrote to me, everything, from that moment on. It was as if everything came back that I'd lost: The most perfect Shaykh (or so I had thought), two husbands, all my friends and family members. Like someone more than in love, sometimes I wrote poems to the

who knows he is absolutely nothing, a slave of God's, who has no qualities and abilities except from Him. When that person is also pure Awareness of God... what happens? One dies, and never comes back!

92 English: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God." These are the words one says to become a Muslim—words I'd said 60 years earlier without realizing how all-important they are.

human aspect of the Shaykh I would never see in this world; on other days, I thought of him as the perfect guide for a spiritual life. I am far from capable of saying anything about the spiritual nature of the Shaykh at-Tijani; so much of what follows is about his human nature and about the Muqaddams, who were all inestimably less than he was, or mirrors of him.

I was refused though, and that was understandable. It's a highly disciplined Tariqah, whose fuqara follow the Quran, the Sunnah and the Shariah. I was known for my sins, was in scandals online, even photographed naked hugging my second sister-wife; and I wasn't used to submitting to any discipline at all. I'd never prayed on time and was spoiled to death, used to every ease and shortcut. In my old, so-called Tariqah, we woke up when we felt like it and could pray mentally at work; few people fasted during Ramadan; we did our ablutions one time each, drank beer and did and didn't do all kinds of things. I was also 80 years old!

Ibn Arabi said that the Shariah *is* the Haqiqah! And the Tijaniyyah Tariqah follows the Shariah! That was astonishing news to me, because Frithjof Schuon had reduced the Shariah to its absolute minimum. No, actually he had eliminated it for all practical purposes, *and* the Sunnah! He had replaced following Muhammad with following himself... except occasionally, when one had no idea why he suddenly held to one rule rather than another. In marriage for example, he followed no Sunnah requirement to make a marriage valid; but once he told me he couldn't marry a woman and her daughter. Strange.

Magnetized forever

That Tijani Muqaddam knew all levels and aspects of spirituality, all the great masters, the problems of degenerate religions *and* false esoterism in the modern world: *exactly* what I wanted; but he said "Become a Shadhili;" and he said that the Shadhili Shaykh he suggested knew the same things he did, as did several living guides. *However*, everything inside me was saying "The Tariqah Tijaniyyah." I was done for in one second—unable to move from my intention, no matter what—albeit the Tariqah Shadhiliah was not at fault: I love it.

I had no hope, except that the one who wrote to me said I could be sure he would be my friend, and answer my questions. I was beside myself with happiness over that! (Secretly, I didn't dare tell him; but I was planning on being guided through that friendship and his answering my questions, no matter what Tariqah I was in. My justification was that all Paths, of all Turuq, are found in the Tariqah Tijaniyyah).

Eventually, I found out many things that Muqaddam did not tell me: Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani was taught by Muhammad in waking visions, and every prayer and doctrine, each move was decreed by the Prophet himself, who made extraordinary promises to the Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani. There are

excellent reasons to enter every Tariqah; but I can only share a tiny bit about the one I couldn't live without.

Do you remember that early on, I told you, "This is a real book, about real people, with their real names"? I've been telling you to the death that I am real, with faults and sins mountains high, that I tell the truth and am sharing what I can with you, my companions on life's journey. I really did intend this book to be *real* and to be my Last Will and Testament. I wanted you people to be able to find what I did, and in less than 80 years, the way parents do when they die. They give the wealth they've earned so their children will have an easier life *materially*. I wanted my heirs, the seekers in the world, at any level, to find *spiritual* gold and diamonds in the end time, more easily, in these latter days when the seeking is *tough and rough!*

So I'll tell you more: I read that Muhammad, himself, told Shaykh Ahmad that he, Muhammad, was his Master, and that Shaykh Ahmad was to renounce the several initiations he had received from other spiritual masters on earth. The method dictated to him, word for word, by the Prophet, included *all* the other paths from the time Muhammad himself passed away, until the end of time, and including of course, the time of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. That's the reason I said I found an "unsurpassable spiritual master"! It wasn't me who said that: It was Muhammad! Those were the words I'd believed for decades, but about a false master, who was sheer ego. And alas, Dr. Nasr, who told me that—he was no Prophet either! I had become disappointed in some sides of him, while remaining eternally grateful and admiring many of his books and qualities.[93] Why should I follow any other way, when they were all included in the Tijaniyyah *and* as taught by Muhammad, himself? I was incapable of wanting anything else. In the beginning, I absolutely *believed* in that Tariqah; with time, I *understood* too. By far not everyone is intended for one Tariqah, or for one religion, so I am not trying to convert anyone: You will all find what is in your destiny, and there are many great Shuyukh whose books are in the Bibliography.[94]

93 He's one of the wonders of the world for both knowledge *and* wisdom; please be careful with him.

94 It is impossible for anything in this world to be perfect, and the Bibliography is one of them. To make an interminable explanation short, I will address only one controversial author: Alan Watts. Sometimes he explained the original spirit and doctrinal perspective of Zen (especially the Chinese, Tendai and Soto schools) better than did authors who led an orthodox life. For example, in spite of several misguiding "psychological" considerations on Zen arts, in his book, *The Way of Zen,* he transmitted the correct approach to Self-realization and the original "Buddha Mind" development in a very effective way—better than many other "traditionalist" authors. His is a most unusual "case"—as he was perhaps one of the few "irregular" authors (who did not adhere to and did not practise an Orthodox path) but who enjoyed a straight vision and an inner understanding, without expressing his spiritual situation in life. In the afterlife, only God will decide about Alan Watts. His case is not at all like that of Frithjof Schuon—albeit one could think so. We must leave the matter there.

One other Shaykh I love to death is Abdul Qadir al-Jilani; but there have been many great masters[95] of Tasawwuf); but *up to his time*, Ibn Arabi included the wisdom of all those who came before him.

I'd like you to have some idea of how high the Truth is, and how it is only the Truth of God, that it comes through His Prophets, and that the heirs of the Prophets are the Knowers of God, who are nothing but transparent veils, or mirrors, enabling one to learn without having to face pride and personality cults. What one usually calls "true," is exceedingly relative, often inconsequential; but we must honor both truth and Truth.

I went on exploring, found some new friends and sites online, got questions answered by Abu Balqees, and wrote to another Muqaddam—finally finding several (always) hidden Muqaddams, both living and dead. The living ones are real, but hidden, so guess again: No real names. Aside from what I managed to find out by myself, alas! That first Muqaddam had said enough so that I was dying of love for the Muqaddams, so I wrote a poem:

An Ode to the Moons
A Song of Love
For the
Muqaddamiin

Everyone longs to be a Shaykh,
By ijazah[96] or by dream,
Except the Tijani Muqaddamiin.

There's one Sun they say
Of Gnosis, they know
So they put themselves away,
Like night does for day.

A beauty of the Tijaniyyah
Is that no one is Shaykh
No Jamil, Hamid or Kabeeriyyah

95 See Appendix VIII: Quotations from the Masters of Tasawwuf.

96 An Ijazah is a bonafide permission from a previous Shaykh to one who will succeed him. Some Shuyukh (like Frithjof Schuon) were not appointed by a Shaykh. They claim to have been designated as a Shaykh, by an experience sent from God. Actually, his Shaykh *was* appointed by legitimate dreams after his death. No dream or "experience" is valid for a man who flouts revelation.

Only moons witness there
To the Sun Tijaniyyah!

All the Muqaddams' words were such that I saw I had found the Truth, after a lifetime of such bitter disappointments. My previous searching and failures were useful, functional, so I could see that nothing that had happened was without a purpose; but I hoped that my intention was seen by God as ever aimed at proximity with Him and His Messenger. Actually, all the prayers I'd ever made, were answered. And I realized that Muhammad, symbolized by a Mirror of God, occurs in multiple forms of successive Mediators: Those are the spiritual guides, all of whom must be absolutely pure, free of ego and desire, so that one sees through them to the Prophet and through him to God.

Islam has no mediator between man and God in one sense; but on the more narrow, and more difficult spiritual path, one needs guidance at every stage because the ego or the lower soul is exceedingly tricky. It only starts getting frisky as one tries to leave it behind. Then it can come up with false inspirations, sublime-seeming visions, mysterious voices and even miracles, that no one would expect. (Except me, haha: I think I've seen everything one day; but the next day I'm surprised again)! I forgot a detail: The devil hops in too, dead set against anyone's approaching the Lord. And Satan is infinitely more intelligent than the vast majority can imagine. If great scholars and true spiritual guides by any title, and in any revealed religion, see the devil, they can recognize him. As for us ordinary folks, the devil is more tricky and hidden than the greatest villain ever seen—even on TV!

Do you remember, way far back in this book, when I told you that Frithjof Schuon read "The Book of Dreams" about him? His first words were, "I am beginning to believe that I'm a great man." That reply was a "dead ringer"—proving irrevocably that he was a fraud, a liar, and such a megalomaniac as to be a modern version of Pharaoh. I noticed his reply; but you know me by now: I stored it. At least now I can teach from what was stored. Now imagine: I received a letter from a real guide, and I knew it, because he would accept *no* compliment. He, and the several Muqaddams I met later claimed only to be able to teach what their Shaykh said.

Once I needed a savior: I paid compliments to a Muqaddam. He was angry and replied, "Why do I have to listen to you attributing Attributes to me?" He also refused to continue writing to me, *immediately*, if I told anyone who he was. I was scared to death, thinking I'd never be accepted as a faqirah in that Tariqah. I'm never going to compliment another Gnostic person again! But guess what? It's hopeless! Precisely because he was so annoyed with me, I only died of love again—realizing I knew someone who refused to accept anything for himself, even "Attributes," whatever those are. Do you know? He capitalized that word: I guess they are the Qualities of God, which we can

never possess but only reflect. I'm still dead, and dear readers, I'll never live again: My mind, soul, heart, spirit, intellect—whatever there is in us humans, is in love with the Truth! And of human beings, *never* will anyone *ever* impress me again who isn't self-effacing. I've plum gone crazy in love, and can't stop writing poems about it. I'm still conceited myself, becoming proud whenever I do anything right; but face to face with self-effacement or any virtue, Truth, or call it Reality, I plain disappear!

Everyone holy, became infinitely higher than I'd imagined too: And of created beings, that meant Muhammad first. God said He made man in His image: For one thing that means that He put an image of Himself in the "middles" of ourselves, in our spirit. For Muslims, that *image* is a mirror, and the mirror shows us Muhammad. We can see, know, and be taught by Muhammad, the last Prophet, *within ourselves!*

And Truth did not come at all the way I used to think it would come: It only comes from *people who are not there*. (Only *people* mind you: Not the mind, and not books)! That means that some people know, through spiritual realization. I had always known that. What turned my world upside down, was finding a man who wasn't there, and then others... and then realizing that no one was worth anything unless he could only see Muhammad in the mirror of his spirit! As a Tijani, for example, one may love one's Muqaddam, but only if he isn't there: If you love or compliment the Muqaddam himself (too much), you're in for trouble—as you've seen and will yet see.

Well, back to my story: The real Shaykh, Ahmad at-Tijani, had passed away. Never would I see him—so I began to weep. For hours, day and night, I was overcome by both love and distress; and I was writing poems about my love for Truth and weeping lots because he wasn't there. I'd never met him and had no idea what he looked like; I hadn't even found a description of his appearance; but I realized that he knew and taught *all* the Truth, and that by following him, I could know the Prophet, who had been his Master and made him his closest friend. Now "seeing" means realization, so I wrote:

The Truth and Thee

How much do I love the Truth.
Let me count the ways:
I love It more than space and time, yes more
Than all the nights and days.
I love it with all the love, and more,
Than all the love I wasted, upon false loves before.
And I love thee, as the one who tells
all the Truth to me—

And so, it may yet be,
That someday, I too may see!

There in my dear apartment, in Lakeview Village, I told you about my flowers, and my two cats who loved each other, Honeybun and Shakespeare. All those created things had seemed indispensable for my happiness; but one day I didn't really need them anymore and wrote this:

No one but you

No more do I need flowers,
And cats I don't need too.
I don't need anything I used to love;
Because my Shaykh is you.

Allah put beauty in the flower,
Back when time began,
And majesty in mountains: Yes,
All was made by Divine Plan;
But He put a Mirror of Himself
Within the Self of man.

I thought I could almost see Shaykh Ahmad in every leaf of my enormous oak tree. When I stepped outside, he was present all around me, or my love was making nature talk—I can't quite recall all this. The sky, the clouds, the little flowers beginning to come up between the freshly sprouting blades of grass all quivered with my love for him. I was out of my mind due to this totally unexpected kind of love, so I didn't know if he was everywhere or if it was my heart or spirit that was trembling due to love, like every new spring leaf on that tree.

When I was inside, I was so captivated by him, that if I'd seen him in my mirror, I wouldn't have been in the least surprised, because I was disappearing in love for him! When I had to go out of my apartment, I had to splash cold water on my face to appear normal. Remember: Outside my door were some people of a certain type. They thought ISIS was Islam. No one realized I was still a Muslim, because I'd kept it secret: They thought I'd become a Christian-Christian. They all knew I still believed in Islam; but no one thought all that much out there, on the other side of my door. Inside myself, I was trying to be a Muslim kind of Christian, because all Muslims who know enough must love Jesus Christ.

I could *not* stop writing poems, and I thought I should tell my real Shaykh how much I loved him, every single day; and I'd love him, come what may—like if I died or the world ended:

If the world ends

If the sun stops shining,
And the moon does too,
And all the birds fly away,
I'll still love you!

When the world does end,
Or in the grave I'll be,
A loving note I'll send
Saying, "Now I see!"
And I'm oh so grateful:
To be guided by thee!

Months after writing that, I got into so much trouble that... well, it happened after this book was about finished. I had to sleep on the floor in an airport in Pakistan for five days, sort of accused of being a terrorist or a spy.[97] I didn't know whether to laugh or die; but I was pacing up and down, singing a new version:

The sun stopped shining!

The sun DID stop shining,
And the moon did too.
All the birds flew away;
And I'm STILL loving you!

The world did end;
In the grave I be;
But a loving note I send,
Saying, "Soon I'll see,

97 I went back to Pakistan to live with my family again, believing what Abdul Hayy had said. When I arrived in Islamabad; I found out I *was* on the blacklist and Abdul Hayy had been wrong. The "man in the green turban" and the official who had refused to believe I was a Muslim... they had won! At least for a while.

And I'll always thank Allah
Cause my Guide was thee!"

That love I had has *no* resemblance to the love women have for men: It is so much greater as to be transforming. *No one* I had ever loved before meant anything; and the whole concept of love was surpassed.[98] The most personally loveable person was Muhammad. People who saw him act in one incident, or heard him speak briefly, had adored him more than anyone they could imagine. A very great spiritual master reflects the truth taught by Muhammad as if he were a mirror; but personally too, a true master like Ahmad at-Tijani is supremely loveable. The lessons I'd learned up until then, seemed like little puddles of murky water compared to the ocean I'd found; and all my sins ceased to be in my consciousness. Nothing in my past life mattered a whit. Nothing existed that I cared about anymore either—albeit I stayed sort of loving of those around me, the way I've always been, like with you. The symbolism of being "magnetized" is useful. When the compass is set to point North, it has no more "memory" of other directions. I felt what I think is a reality: Purified of sins. I plain forgot the past, except for being able to write for you here.

Only God can really forgive sins: I'd always known that; but this state I was in was so transforming... Oh I know! I think that when a bird flies high, it only sees the sky and lives in it. The earth is forgotten: That's how I was feeling about my sins and about murky people I'd encountered. They were all down below and hadn't stained me, سبحان الله وبحمده (Glory be to God, and all praise and all gratitude is for Him).

The only trouble was that I kept on dying of separation, and whenever I talked, death got in somehow—even in my sense of humor. Actually, the one absolute certitude about life, is that we will die. I guess the concept of death crept into my vocabulary, because I was so absolutely loving the Truth and Truth-tellers, to a degree that was unsurpassable, irrevocable. I started talking in rhyme too—sometimes woefully silly things. This wasn't the worst:

Ready to obey; but
Only you!

If I were a starving lioness,
I'd eat grass from your hand.
And if I were Pegasus, wild and flying free,
I'd come to live as one tamed, on land,

98 At the beginning of the chapter, you read: "In the book of my memory, the part before which little is worth remembering—there is the heading Incipit vita nuova: Here begins a new life. That was the day I met you." Well, that's exactly what happened to me: The past had hardly a sentence worth remembering: I had finally met someone I loved, and who taught the Truth about God.

If only an order came from thee.
So why am I in a love so extreme?
It's because you fulfill my wildest dream:
By being a Guide to the Sirat ul-Mustaqiim![99]

On the one hand, I know I got into that state because I was really meant for that Tariqah; but I was also off-balance, and aware of a spiritual loneliness I hadn't realized was there. Suddenly, I remembered an old love poem:

How do I love thee?

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints.
I love thee with the breath,
smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnet 43)

In addition to a true, spiritual love, I was having a strong reaction to finally finding the Truth and real guidance after "*my lost saints*." I had believed that too many people were angels; but one after another turned out badly—so finding Shaykh Ahmad, who is like the sun of Gnosis, was overwhelming. I'd always adored that kind of saint, those of divine knowledge, also called Gnostics. There is a whole other category of Shuyukh; but they'd never interested me, for one thing because their way is included in the way of knowledge; but the reverse is not true. (They are those who have a way of love, not knowledge).

A few months later, I'd meet my first Tijani Gnostic saint in person—not any of the ones who had written to me, and not a learned man, except in Islam; but a great saint and a real guide. He hardly had to say a word but that I'd understand. His little boy asked me something like how I found his father's teaching. I said, "It's as if he pours pure, fresh water down my throat; I understand as if I'd swallowed what he said." Whatever his individual nature, every Gnostic saint knows God in a way that's far beyond our imagination. Actually, this is symbolic; but I read that, in knowledge, the least of what a Gnostic saint knows is 165,000 times greater than the most we can learn from books.

I'm not going to explain that, because I can't; but if you can imagine an umpteenth of how high that knowledge really is, then you'll benefit from seeing transcendence: That's all I mean to share. I've been blessed since the day I

99 The "Straight Path" back to God, in Arabic. The words "Show us the straight path" are said at least 17 times a day in Muslims' ritual prayers.

heard of the Truth, but not with spiritual realization—mostly with an absolute love for the Truth, for True Knowledge, Real Intelligence and both Wise and Good people, so I'm sharing what I can with you all. All those capital letters mean "from God;" but I'm not even trying to share everything, because you can find your own levels and ways through the Bibliography.

Well, at my first encounter with that wise man, I told him I didn't know anything, but rattled off a dozen of my unknowns. One was about a detail in the ritual prayer (Salat), called the Tahiyyah.[100] When he answered, and I realized that I had a Gnostic saint, right in front of me, all my anxiety over separation dropped dead! Since then, I haven't shed a single tear or felt distressed due to separation from anyone or anything—even though I've gone to the other side of the world again, at age 80. I no longer miss anyone who has passed away, or who isn't near me—not even people I know I'll never see in this world, like my Shaykh; and this came *after* weeping day and night from separation! I am *not* in any exalted state; however, there's a great grace in being near a saint: I know that that proximity gave a grace that cured me of several ailments. (Just now, I found out that it's a known fact: One learns more from the grace of a saint than from his words; and some almost never talk)! Praise the Lord, I didn't meet that kind!

The last deadend

But let's go back in time, to my last deadend: The first Tijani Muqaddam I had written to, did not find me qualified for that Tariqah. That was torture; but I had to obey. He did say he would always be my friend and answer questions, as would several Muqaddams who understood my past and the types of problems I had living in the modern world, and in the American, materialistic society. Actually, I was crazy about him, and whenever he sent me something to read by other Tijani Muqaddams, I simply melted in love, or plum died.

Every word I heard was so true that I was dying of love right and left! I've no idea how it happened, but I've kept using words about death until today, while being exceedingly happy. Aside from being an absolute, I guess death is a side-effect of extreme love.[101]

Now I realize that there are people who long for what is highest, most sublime, absolute, ultimate and infinite. Passionate fervor for such ideals is absolutely normal if there isn't love of self-grandeur in it. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Do not seek illumination unless you seek it like a man whose hair is on fire

100 Online, there are many mediocre, false and Wahabi sites, which are not easy to recognize until one has had much experience. For example, there is false information about the Tahiyyah. One has to take what's online with caution.

101 Actually, one can die of spiritual love. A Moroccan faqir died recently of love for Muhammad. However, none of the greatest masters of Tasawwuf died of love, and they all taught a sobriety and sense of balance that prevents that. I mean: One would not die of love, if one had a true Gnostic Shaykh.

seeks a pond." However, we (because those people include me) can become blinded, inebriated by, drunk on, sublime ideas. That happened around Frithjof Schuon in the past; and there are many still caught in that net.

When one finds *true* esoterism, as I finally did, there's an incalculable difference between being inebriated and gaining in fervor. I can't put all the doctrines in a book; but I can share my joy with you; and I can easily defend myself against the possible criticism that I only became infatuated with another illusion. The difference is that true esoterism is true according to all that God, His Prophets, and the Gnostic saints said; and it's also True, Good and Beautiful at all levels. There are no more impossibilities—like sublime talk and immoral behavior, lack of kindness, not telling the truth on a lower level to protect one's sublime image.

I absolutely must add *again*, that it's practically impossible to "see" the difference between what comes from feelings and what comes from God, unless one gives up the world. One can have mountains of faults, like I still have; but *esoterism* is *secret* by definition, and it is only *accessible* by *grace*; however, the individual has no access to that grace unless he finds a way to avoid mixing oil and water: *One cannot be worldly* and even *recognize* a true spiritual path. And when one arrives at the "trysting place," after searching, there is no one there, except people who have somehow given up the world. And they are so wonderful that one never wants to leave!

I waited obediently—still in my dear apartment at Lakeview Village, until I got a surprising letter: My new Muqaddam-friend, who had said I should become a Shadhili faqirah, had found out that there was no Muqaddam to initiate me in the US for the particular Shadhili branch he'd advised me to enter! Aho![102] It took me a few seconds to weigh that. It meant I had another chance to try and be accepted as a Tijani!

I started recommending my own self, a mile a minute, bragging. I told my new Muqaddam-friend *all* the virtues and talents I could dream up. I told him what great things I'd done too; and promised to do *anything* except pray all night, which I was scared of. I forgot the whole idea of being humble, but think: How could I recommend myself for being humble? On and on I went, until he said, "How many emails do I have to answer?" And, "in eight days, you've written 34 pages." (He was exceedingly kind and patient too. I adored him and everyone I encountered, living or dead). I didn't care much about being annoying—having nothing to lose mind you, as I was willing to die for that Tariqah. And *if* I'd known his address, or that of *any* Tijani Muqaddam, I'd have sold all I had, gone to a house and sat on a doorstep until admitted: I knew the value of what I wanted. And I was not wrong: There are encyclopedias on this subject, from all times and places.

102 Aho means "Oh, good news!" in the languages of some Native American tribes.

Finally, guess what? He said, "Do Istikharah, and I will do Istikharah also, to see if this is the way for you." He got a positive answer to his Istikharah!!! (I didn't dare ask how or why). That meant that my Lord had destined me to follow the Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani, who had *himself* accepted me! No one could refuse me after that! I would then have to go to Morocco, to the Zawiyyah of Shaykh Ahmad, who is buried there, and any Muqaddam could both educate me and give me the Tariqah. Although I felt as if I was living in luxury, I gave away all I had again.

Later, my Muqaddam-friend forgave me for annoying him. I explained how precious I found Divine Knowledge, and he could only agree for every reason; but among others, it was *his* words about the Tariqah Tijaniyyah that had "struck me with a love like lightning." Besides, there is nothing better in all existence than the Truth, and a Shaykh who guides to the Truth is worth all that's in the cosmos. I had read the life of Milarepa.[103] Most people would find that extremely exaggerated, because Milarepa had a true idea of the worth of a spiritual guide. I've always agreed with him, and my friend could not say I was wrong: He was *more* devoted to the Shaykh at-Tijani than I was! So were all the Muqaddams I read about, wrote to, or met.

Of course I wrote him a poem about the day I first wrote to him, and about how everything had started when I met Abu Balqees:

Even IF this world
is through!

One day, when I was feeling so happy and free,
Without any obligation a troubling me.
I wasn't working hard then, and didn't know thee:
I only loved cats and flowers, a huge oak tree!

Then a young man appeared in a manner so strange:
He lived far away, yet within writing range.
Abu Balqees and I got along like birds on a branch:
I so trusted him that I gave him carte blanche!
He said, "Write to this man: he could straighten you out!"
After 30 years of trouble, I trusted him fine—had not any doubt!
So I did it: I wrote straight away to that man—
Explaining the situation as best one can.
A letter came back and my life was done.

103 See Appendix I: Bibliography, where there is a biography of Milarepa.

I've been dying ever since—but only ALMOST won!
The man said "No, you're not for me; go on to ANOTHER one!
"Yet METAPHYSI-CAL-LY,
for ME," Said HE:
"All the Truth is in the Tariqah AT-TI-JA-NI!!!"

Lightning came down and went all through!
I absolutely believed that letter! IT WAS FROM YOU!
For the very first time in a whole long life,
All was clear and good: Not the slightest strife!

I moseyed up: "If not my guide: will you be my friend?"
"You can be sure of that:" you said... so praise the Lord! No deadend!
Maybe twas those words, or what I don't know; but Allah did the strangest things to me:
I absolutely and forever died of love—for the Truth that came through thee!

Outside there were still the dear white clouds and my big oak tree,
Wildflowers too, yet wherever I looked, only the Shaykh did I see!
Day and night, I began to cry
And longing to learn the Truth from you made me ready to die.

Now that's all done:
Twas the Truth that won!
Crucial things shine much better now, both from moons and sun.
Yet I'm still in love with the Truth that comes through you:
And I'll go right on—nevermind if THIS world is through!

When I see the sun of Gnosis and our Prophet—oh so perfect and true:
I will adore them more, even humanly too—
Because I learned about love,
In dying of that, for the Truth, that comes through you,
From the Prophet, and the Shaykh: They are my beloveds too—
Yet what we all do, is die for ALLAH,
The Criterion of EVERYTHING TRUE!

Now you may think that I personally had opinions about the great worth of spiritual guides and about finding the Truth, and that I was fire and flame for everything of the Spirit, because I was made that way. No! It's a *fact* that every spiritual good is worth the world, the sky and all that's in them. As concerns the value of an accomplished realized person as a guide, here is what Shaykh Ibrahim an-Niasse said... but, oh dear, help! I adore him too. He was one of the true and great, recent Shuyukh—and he is unusual in that he was no "hidden moon." Rather was he too radiant to "hide"—not that others weren't as great; but he had a shining role in this world, with some 300 million people following him today. He is a true Shaykh, with a sense of proportions; but many of his *followers* exaggerate his importance while lessening that of other great Muqaddams (often called Shuyukh). Now here he is, speaking about the importance of a true guide:

> "Know that this science we mention is not mere wagging of the tongue... It cannot be acquired through talking or written texts, but can only be received directly from the people of experience (*ahl al-adhwāq*). It can only be gained through serving (*khidma*) the people of spiritual distinction… and companionship with the perfected ones. By Allah, no one has ever succeeded (on this path) except by companionship with one who has succeeded, and the achievement is only from Allah."

To show how great, how large, God is, there are exceptions to everything: Sometimes, someone attains realization without a guide (guru in Sanskrit). The obvious example is Sri Ramana Maharshi; but here's what he said: "I have never said that there is no need for a guru. All depends on what you call guru. He need not be in a human form."[104]

Milarepa, the Buddhist whose life I'd read, lived in the 11th century, had a dreadful past, as terrible as possible; but he repented and wanted a spiritual life. He had heard of a great master, named Marpa. Knowing Milarepa's past, and being wise, Marpa tested Milarepa severely—making him build three houses of stone, with his own hands. After he had built each one, Marpa knocked it down; but a fourth house is still standing in Bhutan. That was not the only way Milarepa was tested; but he remained absolutely steadfast. Marpa finally explained the trials, and Milarepa became one of the greatest Buddhist saints.

There are many such stories, in all true religions, and they are often literally true. Some do *not* normally appeal to us Occidentals, who like everything to be "reasonable." Well, reason has its limits; but I like it, by nature; and I sure prefer the ways of a reasonable Shaykh to the way Marpa treated Milarepa. Still, after a lifetime, I'm absolutely convinced (like every seeker of Truth who

104 In Tasawwuf, Gnostics who had no guide are called "Ummi" (literally meaning illiterate) or Uwaisi, after Uwais al-Qarani, a great saint who lived during or right after the time of Muhmmad; but who never met him.

ever lived) that a true guide is worth every bit as much as Milarepa thought. *And*, no matter what happens, unless your head is stuffed with straw, you too are going to learn that some surprising things are true.

You may feel as if you were made of stone; you're as fervent as stone soup, and aren't pious for a penny, okay; but then be cool and logical: What is one, a hundred or a thousand years of life worth, compared to eternal life? As arguments go though, that is nothing compared to the fact that the material and psychic worlds only exist like fleeting waves on the ocean of Existence. What we all think is real, is only borrowing a material appearance from the only absolute Reality, God. And some of you are not interested in spiritual things, because you are fascinated by nature, science, creation. Indeed, creation is an endless wonder. You are right. It's fascinating; but logically, what is creation compared to its Creator?

Muhammad

No one is important or existing but Allah and what He has created; but the best of all created beings is Muhammad: That's what God says in His final revelation. The reason that the Shaykh at-Tijani was of sublime importance, was that he was taught that by the Prophet; and his words guide, in the most direct way, to the Truth. The Muqaddams I met or wrote to, were only reflecting the light of the sun of Gnosis, who himself was the disciple of Muhammad alone.

Now every great Shaykh of the past had spiritual realization, and in a way, all Turuq are equal. In other ways, they are not. It is exactly the same with religions and Prophets: The Quran says *both* that there is no difference between the Prophets *and* that He has preferred some above others. Islam includes all the other religions; Muhammad's nature includes the nature of all the other Prophets, and the Tariqah Tijaniyyah includes the paths in all other Turuq. Everyone is attracted to what he is destined for, but that idea attracted me, irresistibly. I myself, was destined for a particular path, so the second I heard of it, I was ready to do all I could to travel that way for knowledge. Milarepa never thought of looking for a different master either, even when Marpa tested him to the utmost... and the tests were much *worse* than what I told you above.

No one in all creation knows God as well as His last Prophet; therefore there's no way to know Him entirely, unless we "pass through" (or disappear in, have annihilation of our individuality in) the Prophet. No matter how great an individual is, his substance is too small to conceive of God as He really is. Each revelation has a figure like Muhammad; but he includes their knowledge.

You know I love people; well, the more perfect is the holiness of a person, the more loveable as a human being he is too. One sees a man in Muhammad, who was so perfect that he reflected all the Divine Names and Attributes. When he did simple things, his character became so apparent that his enemies

entered Islam due to witnessing his behavior up close; and the Quran says: وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ "Truly thou art of a tremendous character." On varying levels, that's also the reason I went out of my mind with love for Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani, when I was 80 years old, and he had died almost 200 years earlier. It's also the reason I love "The moons," those self-effacing, spiritually realized Muqaddams. Some I met, some I only wrote to and others have died; but I adore the Prophet, my Shaykh and all Gnostics. Therefore, I know I'll be with them in Heaven. A hadith says: "You will be with those who you love." That hadith made me write another poem:

In sha Allah
What if?

What if Shakespeare were alive, yea, writing English, he?
Well, if he were, then I'd beg him to write a poem for me.
It would be profound and eternal; but just saying "I love you,"
The very same way I used to do:
As a Shaykh and as human: With your fuqara too!
And if I died, in sha Allah, you'd have a dream:
Not in life or in death would my love different seem.

And if you should say, "I am nothing to me!"
So what? We are all just nothings too;
That doesn't keep me from loving you.
And if, and quite as much as I myself do,
Billions of faqirat start loving you,
I'll only say "Welcome," and "You're all so smart:
I'll love you too. There's no separation: We'll all be of one heart!"

And if, past space and time, we all open our eyes in a land so grand—
What if we see the holiest people, all right there at hand:
So many Gnostics, and so much deserving of love—
Yet I'll still be by you on your minbar, up there above,
Because the Prophet said, "You will be with those who you love!"

A Muhammadian Jewel

One of the reasons I died of love, was that I read about a prayer in praise of Muhammad, called "Salat al-Fatih." There are other amazing prayers in praise of Muhammad, with blessings beyond count; but this is the only one that comes from God Himself, in praise of His own creation. It is said that everyone loves God, and God loves Muhammad. Well, in this prayer, He Himself, tells us *why* He *Himself* loves His final Messenger, whose "Light" was the first thing he created. So Salat al-Fatih is the apex, because it is a Divine Eternal Word. It is the prayer and praise of God for His final Prophet. Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani said that there is nothing else to search for: Salat al-Fatih allows you to achieve everything you want. Now I'm not sure about this; but I think that means that it gives you all you want of real things, like knowledge, Paradise. There are conditions for receiving all the merits of saying this prayer, but it is of great benefit to anyone who says it.

One of the lines in that prayer, struck "home" with me, because of all I'd seen in the way of lying, justified with the idea that one could lie to defend the reputation of Frithjof Schuon, who was assumed to be above common mortals. There's an enormous problem with that: God decreed what pleases Him, and truth at all levels pleases Him. In that revealed prayer, there's a line in praise of Muhammad, calling him "The divine helper towards Truth *by means of truth*." The Truth with a capital T can only be reached through telling the plain, honest truth.[105] Being, living, *at every level* in Truth is Muhammadian.

The Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani said, "After I had studied the prayer (Salat al-Fatih) I realized that it excels the worship of all jinns (believing spirits), humans, and angels." And he said, "The Apostle of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) told me: 'No one has ever blessed me with a prayer better than Salat al-Fatih.'" Shaykh Ahmad also said, "... If the residents of the Seven Skys and the Seven Earths congregate to describe the rewards of Salat al-Fatih they would fail." And he said, "What you have heard about the bounty of Salat al-Fatih is a drop in the sea compared to what is concealed."

A treasure chest

Before hearing from that first Muqaddam, I only knew a few things about the Tijaniyyah, and I was scared. Abu Balqees lived near a community of Tijanis from Senegal and he told me that most of them were as thin as beanpoles, and *they prayed all night!* I knew I could never do that *or* be ascetic: I was too old and weak in body, mind, soul... whatever is in us humans. All I do well is talk and love; but I have never wanted a spiritual path of love. What I've always wanted is a path of knowledge. Well, in one of my first letters, I asked about

105 There are some exceptions to practically everything; but those are beyond the scope of this book.

asceticism. The answers led to a treasure chest, full of every kind of spiritual path—not only an ascetic way, and not only a path of love, or knowledge either. Muhammad taught Shaykh Ahmad *all* the paths. Oh dear: I'm still dying of wonder over that! It seems that some people are made for a way of asceticism: They find all they want in the Tariqah Tijaniyyah. Others are meant for other ways. That is the reason for a requirement that many find strange: Tijani fuqara are not allowed to visit other Shuyukh—not living, not dead (except companions—those who lived at the time of God's Messenger). One cannot, pass from the all-inclusive to the limited. For the exact same reason, one can convert *to* Islam, but not *from* it. As the final revelation, it includes all of those that came before it.

The fact that the Tariqah Tijaniyyah is a treasure chest, full of all the spiritual paths, explains many things: It even explains what I tell you and what I can't tell you, because the doctrine of pure Gnosis is beyond me; asceticism is beyond me... nearly everything is beyond me. So, by destiny, I can only give you a glimpse of *one* of the many ways—*one* of the gems in that treasure chest—only the one I was suited for... and it was a miracle, that finally, as a love-type person, I found a way of Gnosis! There was a path for me in there! So what happened next?

The time came: Everything looked hard!

Finally, after months of struggling with red tape, automation and many inhuman dead ends, I managed to leave the US. The trip was unbelievably difficult: Everything went wrong; but I felt strong inside. All the trials and knots I met, were exactly the kinds I can handle. The difficulty mixed with ease made me keep reciting: "Truly with difficulty cometh ease," in Arabic. (Quran, 94:6).

Within days, I was in the Old City of Fez, Morocco, where I visited the Mosque and tomb of my Shaykh, Ahmad at-Tijani. I could have died of sorrow, if I'd seen his tomb earlier; but I hadn't the least bit of separation-sadness left. That sure seemed to be because I was living in the home of that first Gnostic saint I'd ever seen: The one I told you about above. After one evening in his presence, separation-sadness flew away; but I didn't realize it was gone for ages.

One day I received a letter: A Muqaddam wrote that he would come to "Give me the Tariqah" the next afternoon. Then I remembered that Frithjof Schuon used to recount how the great Shaykh al-Alawi had initiated him, in saying, "Come forward that I may *give you* the Tariqah." He said that meant that he was being mysteriously named the successor of his Shaykh; but now I see that was nonsense. Well, before the initiation, I had to agree to 23 conditions. Reading those intently, I absolutely accepted them all. If I'd been told I

had to move all the sand by the oceans, I would have accepted, and trusted in the Lord, because... well, you know.

The day I was going to receive the initiation with a family and children in the same room (although they didn't realize the profundity of the situation) I told the Muqaddam I was living with: "I can't have dinner with your family and act as if this is a day like any other. I'm going to faint, or burst into tears: *please* come with me into a separate room where Sidi X will receive me into the Tariqah." He scolded me (!) and said I should control myself; that I was making no sense; and that there were "women, who were *men* in religion!" Never had I heard of such a thing. He meant strong, not easily overcome by emotions. I got ahold of myself right away; and from then on I've just dropped the idea of weeping like women! (Well, most of the time). The change came from the grace of being with him though: Several of my errors and weaknesses left! I didn't even realize they'd gone till later. I told you: The *presence* of a saint teaches. Occidentals are used to talk and reasoning. Abu Balqees had told me that the most important thing was the presence of a real Shaykh; but I forgot that until I'd seen one. Then the point came home like an arrow hitting the bullseye![106]

The saint and the sinner

At my expense, I'll share an incident with you. For three months, I lived in the house of the Gnostic saint in Fez, Morocco—the one I've been telling you about. Well, one day someone was so insolent towards me that I lost all my humility, and my temper too! At the dinner table, with his wife and children, I started, and did a thorough job of it too... started defending myself and telling the whole family how great I was! I noticed my "host" looking at me; but I didn't repent or realize I'd disgraced myself thoroughly for a while afterwards. Then I went out and told him how ashamed I was. He said that when one is treated insolently like I'd been, one should take it as a test coming from God—not from the individual who did it. I asked, "So what should I have done?" "You should have gone back in your room (nicely) and shut the door!" I felt as if I'd fallen so very far down that he'd never teach me again.

The next day, he taught me marvelous things again, as if nothing had happened! Afterwards, I felt very touched by his total forgiveness, after such an outrageous performance. Not only did he forget it, as if nothing had ever been,

106 Buy a dozen apples—not expensive, not cheap. Now look at one in there, neither the best nor the worst. That's what many realized people look like to an outsider. That's *even* what a man may look like to his own family sitting around the dining table, while he instructs a seeker of the Truth. That is most often the situation in the Tariqah Tijaniyyah; but it was astounding to me. I was used to seeing Frithjof Schuon walk into a majlis wearing a royal blue silk cloak, looking like a king. See here what God, Himself says: "Pride is my cloak, and majesty My robe, and he who competes with Me in respect of either of them I shall cast into Hell-fire." (Abu Dawud and others).

he was so generous as to teach me again right away! My heart was always melting over something; but that was my shame, followed by a total forgiveness and a great generosity—all in such a short time, that I've ever been grateful to have known someone with such a lovely nature. *Both* spiritually *and* humanly, knowing someone like that is a blessing one cannot forget.

Nothing changed by miracle!

After the initiation, you'd have thought I'd have changed. Yes, I wasn't weeping day and night due to separation from Shaykh Ahmad; but other than that, I was more crazily in love with his every word, and I kept on writing poems:

Who do I adore?

Who is the Shaykh who I adore?
He's the same one I adored before:
The one I saw in the trees and sky,
Before La Vita Nova: His words made me die!
But NOW, NOTHING is the same as twas before,
Except 'tis the same one I adore!

So "Who am I, and who are you?"
When I read such things, I turn so blue!
I didn't care who I was anymore—
Nor if anyone found me bad or a bore;
But NOW, need I see HIM in the sky so blue?
Nay, I see his WORDS, where anything's True.
If someone else said it, I think twas from him,
Could only have come from a pseudonym,
Because he knows all the Truth,
And sends it to me from Him!

You could ask, "How long and how deep?"
Forever—even when in the grave I'll sleep;
And how MUCH do I love the one I adore?
Oh, I've said it so much, I'm an awful bore!

Months passed after the initiation. It was NOT *so easy* to fulfill all those conditions! There were five ritual prayers to say *on time!* I'd never thought of praying on time in 80 years. And I was told to *concentrate* and to do each act as *perfectly* as possible[107] for hours every day. There were also major "details"—like new virtues I'd never even dreamt existed! What is self-effacement anyway? I have no idea how to practise that. And you know what? Really knowing the Truth (about God and everything spiritual obviously) means realization! That requires absolute self-effacement, limitless concentration, spiritual intelligence, perseverance, meditation, understanding the Truth, *not thinking*, and *work*.

I'm a wreck: Easily conceited, playful, loving nearly everybody and everything. I lose my head, have a temper, am undisciplined—it's endless, and I'd say

hopeless;
but
I'm too well-educated in faith!

My Muqaddam-friend was still there, and he wrote sometimes—telling me so many deep truths, that I was always dying of love for God, the Prophet, all Prophets, my Shaykh, all the Muqaddams and saints I knew of; *but* all I had was love. *Life*, *and doctrine*, *all the duties*, *were seeming hard and really complicated*. The only times I thought I was half alright, were when I was in *sujud*.[108] There, with my forehead on the floor, and when I shut my eyes at night, I did feel close to God, as I always had—and in crises too. Generally, I was feeling extremely burdened—as if I were looking at a high mountain I was supposed to climb in old age; but I thought I'd have to stay like that forever. I didn't tell anyone though.

In that state, I did love God absolutely and totally. That made me love the Prophet, and Shaykh Ahmad; but I was also dying of love for the moons—those self-effacing Tijani Muqaddams. After knowing them, I could hardly imagine anyone better—at least on earth, and all I seemed good at was loving. I wrote my Muqaddam-friend a poem:

Love for the moon

I love the moon for the sake of Allah
Both in the dark of night and light of day—

107 That's because following the Sacred Law is essential for realization. Ibn Arabi said in several ways that the Shariah is the Haqiqah; and see Appendix VIII: Quotations from the Masters of Tasawwuf.

108 Prostration. This is the part of the Muslim ritual prayer, when one's face is on the ground, and one says, "Glory be to my Lord, the Most High." This is the moment when God is most attentive to our prayers; but He is really everywhere, closer than our jugular vein, and everywhere we turn our face.

Both in Paradise, when the sun will be there,
And now when we miss him: he's gone away.
Thou art only a witness to the light of the sun.
That's fine: I want to hide with you since he is more bright,
I'll go to see him with you at the end of this night.

The sun was the Shaykh at-Tijani of course; the Muqaddams are all moons. I knew my precious friend wouldn't be all that happy about the poem, because it was about him, as a moon I loved; and his light really does come from Muhammad, and Shaykh Ahmad. Anyway, I quickly wrote another poem so it would be clear that I saw the Shaykh at-Tijani as Shaykh, and him only as a moon reflecting the light from above:

Aasiya and Pharaoh[109]
A love song for the sun of Gnosis and his beautiful moon

Aasiya was married to Pharaoh, and so was I,
Yet I'm no Aasiya sure, I see her way up high.
Pharaoh tried to kill her: He'd poised a big rock;
But Allah raised her to Him, before came the shock.

Now Allahu akbar; and we're in the end time:
There are compensations—hers and mine.
My version of Pharaoh tried to kill me too;
Then Allah gave the sun of Gnosis, the perfect Shaykh, YOU!
Yea, twas He Who gave me the sun—and of Prophets, the Seal.
Then servants of the sun, He gave me them too!

Once I saw a rainbow around an eve's moon:[110]
Colours were ever coming in and fading out:
Later, a moon of yours would shine Truth, not doubt:

109 This poem is based on a hadith from Ibn Abbas, which is not in the best known collections. The wife of Pharaoh, named Aasiya, is one of the most perfect women of all times. She was a follower of Moses and was about to be killed by Pharaoh, who had an enormous rock poised over her; but just before it fell, God took her soul.

110 I did see a rainbow around the moon once; but I don't turn natural events into signs for my own life (except to rhyme!) because that's a way of falling into self-centeredness. What I meant in this poem was that a real guide on earth, seems as wonderful as a moon with a rainbow around it. *All* colors denote the whole truth—nothing left out)!

The bow I'd seen was a sign: A servant of yours I'd have soon—
Yet thou art ever the sun and he's only the moon!

I got an answer. It scared me to death, because I thought I had to give up everything in the world—even those Muqaddams I call moons. That beloved moon said—more or less, "You don't really love us, although you think you do. You are always loving the Truth: You see the Truth coming from people; but you are really loving God the way you did in the beginning." He sounded harsh; but he is a gentle, thoughtful person, whereas I can be rather aggressive in personality. He was teaching me something I'd only understand later.

My heart sank! I answered my friend: "Oh dear! At the moment, that sounds awful! I'M *supposed to like that*? I guess I get the idea: I should give up loving Muqaddams and all teachers of the Truth; then I'll be able to 'see' the Truth after I renounce them?" (The rest of the universe seemed insignificant by then: All that was left in the world was those few moons, or wise, realized and self-effacing men).

I mean really: I'd searched my whole life, had found the unsurpassable spiritual master, who was only represented by Muqaddams, who were self-effacing like the moon... and now my only *friend-moon*, or say *friend-Muqaddam*, tells me that I don't really love the best people I'd ever met! That was *it*: I had to give up absolutely *everything in this world*, in order to have the divine knowledge I'd been looking for up until age 80? Now really, that was a bit much! I would do it though, because one never loses with God. I was not, in deepest reality, afraid of losing anyone or anything for God. Everyone is in Him, the way the waves are in the ocean. (I knew that already, in theory; but wait). At the time, I felt like fighting—saying, "*Yes* I *do* love you all: You underestimate me!" Besides, my feelings were hurt: I'd loved my heart out and then been told I wasn't really loving my favorite people on earth!

Just now I read about a great spiritual master, who said that from the disciple's point of view, the guide is better than anything in the world; but the realized guide sees a totally different picture. For him it's an illusion that there is a disciple somewhere, seeing a guide outside of himself. The guide is really inside him; and there's no difference between the two of them. The guide is really the Self: In Islam, Muhammad. Oh my friends, and ah my foes (I mean everyone): There *is* nothing but God!

A letter came back, explaining, and it said more or less, that I was wrong! He hadn't meant that I had to give up the Muqaddams, like him, or anyone I loved, not any teachers of divine knowledge. He meant that in deepest reality, there *is* nothing but God! That's what the first Shahadah means: There is no god but God; *so*, I should stop *worshipping* people and realize that they only reflect the Attributes of God. One *can* love people, and they do sort of exist; but no being is really *separate* from God. Without realizing it, whatever and

whoever we love is in Him and comes from Him. They won't seem separate, when we die; but we will still see them, love them, and be with them in Heaven. All that exists will be seen as being *in* and *of* God—like the waves are in and of the sea.

I had written a poem—to the "moon," or to a Muqaddam, because I was overwhelmed by love for him and for all the fine people I'd met. Notice how *many* poems I wrote, and how exuberant I was with love for everyone! No one seemed all that impressed; but my spirit isn't easily dampened: I just kept on sending poems. But when I wrote that poem about love for the moon, and then the Muqaddam I was determined to honor told me I was really loving the Truth, not people, I was shocked. My head was spinning! And I'll never forget the man who was annoyed with me for paying him compliments. *All* of that makes perfect sense now; and I've changed my tune. Hear what Ibn Arabi said: "... the one who adores a created thing, is, in reality, only adoring God—even though he isn't conscious of that... Then when he dies and the curtain falls, he will see that he was only loving God."

Let's go back to the ocean: Remember the image of God's being like the ocean; then all created things, *including us*, are like waves. We do not exist as *separate* beings: We are only a part of the ocean. So I love you, or a certain teacher; but when I die, I'll realize that all your reality comes from God. You'll still be there. I'll still love you dear people, and every teacher, Shaykh and Muqaddam; but I won't be adoring idols anymore. That's what the first Shahadah (There is no god but God) means. Things and people only exist in Him, and Ibn Arabi said: "The manifold [universe] exists and yet it does not exist!" From a profound "point of view," the cosmos is so unreal that Sri Ramana Maharshi could say: "There is no doubt whatsoever that the universe is the merest illusion."

Every time I read that, I want to cry—
Like you, at the thought that someone will die.
Then I remember that we exist like the waves on the sea;
But we are nothing in ourselves: All is He.

I wrote another love song, because I remembered that we *do* exist, I can love the Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani, but in Allah, the way the waves exist in the sea:

Thee in Him, and Him in thee

Pray let me count the ways I love thee:
I love thee as my Shaykh, yea, spiritually
First of all, and that so totally!

Then no less so, humanly and intellectually,
As if each thought were blessed—
Ay! In an everyday way too, but extra-ordinarily —
Yet mainly because of Allah do I love thee!

Twas He Who put this love for both the Truth and thee, in me
And He did it so profoundly and eternally—
With such depth and breadth and height that
My whole being could in fana be, or so it seems to me
If I were to be blessed—erasing only limits of individualitie.

I love thee purely, as men from this world do turn,
So my old sins I dare to hope our God will spurn.
Here below, I love thee in success and trials
And whether life seems rich or poor,
And if God choose, I shall but love thee more,
Yea, after death—so much better than before—
Because I'll see thee in Him profound-ely!
Forever more, will I love thee in Him, and Him in thee!

"Truly with difficulty cometh ease" (Quran, 94:6)

After that Muqaddam told me that I did not have to stop loving my teachers (albeit, I should see who everyone really is) then he said I should give up the mind! *That was worse!* I had asked before how I could get out of cosmos. "That's the way," he said. "Our own mind is the veil. The mind which sets 'conditions' (time, space, whatever is in existence) while Reality [God] wants the Whole. We must be witnessing His Being in sheer eternity."

But how on earth could I give up my mind? That was the hardest thing I'd ever heard of! Can you imagine doing that? That's preposterous! And how I could have been in another so-called "Tariqah" and yet learned nothing, was mind-boggling! I'd honestly never seen self-effacement before; and the ideas that nothing really *is* but God, *and* then that I had to give up my mind too... that was all way out on Pluto! Of course, the fuqara around me had known about such things; but those ideas were not in our daily lives. Now I realize that not one person was even what I see as a real human being today. Oh my heart! Now I only love those who are very different from those I thought I loved lifelong. I'd die to be with them; but one isn't allowed to long for death.

I had not told that Muqaddam that I was feeling as burdened as if I had a mountain on my head; but he also said that there's a totally different kind of spiritual realization! That other kind does not come from work, and endless meditation, and giving up the mind, or concentrating on God. There is a sudden realization, and it comes by grace! I was so relieved to hear that, that I forgot all about moons, poems, existence even!

Immediately, I dared to want that kind of sudden realization. Never would I know the Truth at the rate I'd been going! However, I was asking for more than the world and everything in it: *Now* I not only wanted the knowledge that comes from realization; I wanted God to give it to me as a pure grace, because I couldn't manage otherwise, and works and efforts come from *us*; but grace is better. It comes from *God*.

So I wondered how I could get away with asking so much of my Lord, Who had already saved me from error by graces from the Quran and given me a fascinating life. I got an idea, and wrote back, telling my Muqaddam-friend how I would pray, and I asked him, "Can I get away with this?" (I mean, can I escape from giving up the mind, which seems beyond anything impossible)? I told the Muqaddam that I prayed like this:

> "Allahumma (Oh God), You are all there really is. Glory be to Thee. I only want to Know Thee and Muhammad, and my Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani. Not having anything, I ask for everything free. I ask for sudden realization by grace and some knowledge from the knowledge I love that some Gnostics have. I don't have anything to give Thee—since I'm nothing but reflections of Thy Qualities. Oh! I've always believed that من كان لي آنا له (Whoever belongs to Me, I belong to him) so maybe Thou wilt let me know Thee? I'll give up everything I can: The world, playing with personality, and even any *excesses* in my loves for "the moons" (Muqaddams), teachers, and good people. Amen."

In suspense, I waited. Then came this:

> "السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
>
> Amin, ya Rabb (Amen, oh Lord). Hold this position, it will bring you to Him. He, subhanahu waTaala (Glory be to Him and He is The Most High) has said: أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنّ عَبْدِي بِي، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ إِذَا ذَكَرَنِي ('I am as My servant thinks I am, and I am with him when he remembers Me')."

In other words, he said that God would accept my attitude; I would "have" Him, know Him, because I believed Him to be so generous that He would give Himself to whoever would willingly be His. My whole life, I've said, "I am Thine;" but I hadn't quite dared to believe that He would give me Himself, or that He would give me any of what I want of knowledge of Him (one cannot ask for all knowledge). Ibn Abbas, who was called "An ocean of knowledge" by

Muhammad, commented on the verse: "I only created the jinns (spirits) and men that they should adore Me" (Quran 51:56), as meaning, "that they may *know* Me."

So what does it mean to *really* know God? It means to have spiritual realization; and a person who has spiritual realization is *exactly* like someone who can *see*, when everyone else is blind. One's false idea of what is real changes totally: One sees that God is real, not those material things, that *seem* real. This truth has infinite results; but the first one that comes to mind is that one must believe and follow those who *can see*. I hadn't quite understood that lifelong; but as soon as I did, I wanted to *see* the Truth of God myself, and in the meantime, of course I decided that I had to follow those who can see. I still do argue a bit, and fight, because from the point of view of someone who cannot see like me, it's so very hard to accept what *all* seeing people have said, in all religions, and at all times. One *knows* what is true; but one has to fight with one's own limited vision to *believe* it. And one has to actually *do* things one knows are in accord with sight, when one doesn't actually *see* anything oneself. In a very real way, that *doing* without sight, is the whole spiritual life, and it has infinite degrees. In Islam, saying the five ritual prayers on time, is an elementary example.

Now there's a Truth in what I wrote above that is infinitely larger than it might seem: No one, in any faith, reaches heaven by his own efforts. The *mercy of God* is the determining factor, no matter how great you are, or how hard you work. Once when I was with Protestant missionaries in Pakistan, one of them said I was missing a great grace because Islam is just based on good works. Well those missionaries were taught Islam by other missionaries, who were both ignorant and prejudiced. Indeed Islam does emphasize good works. So do all religions; but not even the Prophet could be saved by good works alone; and he himself said that. A corollary to God's Mercy is trust in Him.

Tie her; and then trust in God أعقلها ثم توكل

The Prophet saw a man whose camel was grazing freely, untied. When he asked its owner why he hadn't tied it, the man said, "I trust in God." Then came the hadith, "Tie her; and *then* trust in God." Now the Arabic verb, meaning "to tie" also means "to use reason or intellect;" so if we get into a predicament or face any obstacle, we are supposed to use the faculties God gave us, before trusting Him to take care of us. *After* that, success comes only from Him.

Millions of people in all religions expect miracles because God is The Omnipotent; but God is also The Immense (*Al-Adhim*) in Islam. His Names, summarized in The 99 Divine Names, display Attributes beyond our imagination, and for each Name there are countless applications.

The Names "The Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate" are of infinite importance, and every important matter should be begun with the

Basmalah: In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Most Compassionate. The Quran says: "… and My Mercy embraces all things." (Quran 7:156).

In Islam, the *saving* Mercy of God, actually *is* already *in* us. It is the Self, or Muhammad; or one could say that it is like a mirror that God put in us. And He put an image of Himself in Muhammad, before He created him on earth. The Quran (God) says to the Prophet: "We have not sent you except as a Mercy for all beings" (Quran 21:107). "All beings" (*al-'alamin*) means all creation, without exception. So Muhammad's universal function is necessarily beyond space and time in nature, and his being the "Seal of the Prophets" gives to his final function an equally universal role.

Ask me again: Why did I write this book for you?

I feel rich! As if I have too much not to give it away, so dying without writing a Last Will and Testament would be tragic. Who have I got to give my wealth to? I'll give everything to anyone who wants it: That means you, in various ways, according to what you want to take.

Remember the picture of Esther, on the cover? Well, I'm dying to tell anyone who cares (and that must mean you: You're still here!) how God saves people who believe in Him. He saved the Jews many times, He saved the Christians and the Muslims many times too. They/we, are all called "Monotheists." My life is not really about me. I detest the idea of writing an autobiography; but I wanted you all to see how the God of Islam helped an individual Muslim —even though I was a great sinner and full of faults, yet how He led me out of error into Truth, so lovingly and mercifully that I can't keep quiet about it! This is a real, personal story written for real people, who likely have faults. I want to talk to *you*—and in a way, I'm like Anne Frank, the young Jewish girl who wrote a diary. Confiding in you, helps me too!

Do you realize that my father was brought up in a circus and my mother was so difficult and prejudiced that I wanted to live in a closet? They were atheists, and I went to college not even knowing God existed, and then lived in error for most of my life—and here I am having found the eternal Truth! No, I didn't find it; but God made me want It, and then showed me the way to It, in spite of everything. And I've found a *path* to It; but no, I haven't "realized" the Truth. That can come in the grave; but I have enough of the "keys" to be able to leave you with an inheritance. In Islamic, Jewish and Tibetan Buddhist doctrines (but there must be profound parallels in other revelations) there is a life after death, in the grave, before Judgement Day and then Paradise or Hell. While in the grave, one may hear, be tested, suffer, see and enjoy the sight of one's place in the Afterlife, be taught, and be helped by others' prayers. That's why Muslims have many prayer gatherings for their deceased loved ones, and it's the reason that the Tibetan Book of the Dead is read aloud to those who

have died. That book instructs the deceased about his religion. I knew a faqirah, who was present after a Christian man died. While his body was as yet unburied, his heirs started disputing around his corpse. His face took on an angry look: They saw it and left quickly; but she was the only one present who knew that the dead can also hear—perhaps only for a certain time. In the Bible, "The gospel was preached even to the dead." (1 Peter 4:6). Whole books have been written about this in different religions.

There's another thing I told you early on: Do you remember how I saw a rainbow around the moon, on a misty night in Switzerland? That's so rare, so beautiful, and so astonishing, that, at the time, I thought it was a symbol of the greatness of that false Tariqah I'd found. Now, at the end of my life, I'm still remembering the awe caused by the colors fading in and out, around the moon—one of the loveliest things I've ever seen in my life. All colors mean completeness to me, and roundness denotes perfection: Well, that's what God gave me in the end: Teachers who knew about all religions, races and countries, levels of wealth. They hold to all that's true, and realize the Absolutely True—while being perfectly awake to what is false. That was all I ever wanted, after I heard the words, "the truth with a capital T." But our Lord (yours and mine, whatever your religion may be) also gave a fullness of blessings in this world, with children and friends, beauty and nature—a love overflowing too!

Oil and water

It is *impossible* to even realize that real Truth exists, if you are influenced by the world, period, *or* by the philosophy of the modern world.[111] As concerns the *modern* world, that's because knowledge is all reduced to "points of view." Many people waste lots of patience on being "tolerant" of those queer "points of view," which are all nowhere. And I can hear some people saying that I myself "have a point of view:" Not exactly: *All* people who give up the world for God have some things in common. They might (but not necessarily) differ on some ideas; but they will recognize one another the way one recognizes members of one's own family. If I met anyone of another Tariqah, another race, nation or time—still, we would see eye to eye on practically everything. That's why a Born Again Christian and I loved one another.

Jesus said, "One cannot love God and Mammon." And it's as impossible as mixing oil and water (according to a hadith from Jesus Christ in Islam) to be (fully) spiritual and worldly at the same time. Everyone can be pious; but there are levels of piety. I think you *can* keep on being pious though, and finally the

111 Muslims: If you read several books in the Bibliography—and those by Seyyed Hossein Nasr are excellent—you will realize that the modern world is all based upon innovation (*bid'a*) which the Prophet called the worst of matters, at least every single Friday. We are seeing a materialistic so-called civilization, which is opposed to all spirituality, not only Islam.

world will leave by itself: You can find the Truth too, just due to piety. God says, "Be God-fearing, and *then He will teach you.*" (Quran, 2:282). The Arabic word for piety is "taqwa" though: That doesn't mean just feeling sweet about Him; it means obeying Him *too!* That's where many people miss the boat: They think they can do whatever they feel like doing, think anything *too,* and then say, "Oh my Lord, I love *You!*"

In order to "swim in the mud" of the world like a mudfish,[112] while staying clean, one needs to know what that mud (the modern world) is like. Therefore, in the Bibliography, you'll find many books—some by the perfect René Guénon, who is harder to read for some, and others by my great professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Although I've said that he is not a true Shaykh, he *is* a great man, a luminous scholar, a "discerner" about all the errors of modern philosophies. He actually taught "*Furqan*:" That's an important Arabic word in the Quran, meaning the Criterion or discernment; but the word "*Furqan*" has infinite depth, because it's one of the names of God's Words—those Words which make up the revelation in the Quran.

You will see one book by Frithjof Schuon in the Bibliography too. I want you to see how impressive he was, for one thing. For another, notice how he thinks he is above everything, including the sacred law, and how he tries to justify that. His ideas, like about David and Solomon, are not the ideas of our Lord.

Love for real people, for Truth – and all that leads above!

You saw how I loved people from age nine, when I read my first gripping novel. Then, after hearing that God existed, at age 17, I only read biographies of saints and Prophets; but at age 80, I meet real people, so I started falling in love all over again, but in the right way loving people who lead above. The strange thing is, that I don't exist, and neither do they! All that's real is God, and we do love one another, but in Him. What we are loving is always Him. I keep struggling with being on the circumference, but longing for the center, or for Heaven above, so I keep on loving people, one at a *time*—anyone who shows himself to be a straight *line.* Actually, we do love one another—both here below and in the Hereafter. Well, I playfully wrote a poem to a real person and a guide—making fun of Abdul Majid, who told me that the Muqaddam doesn't exist, and neither do I. A guide is a line, a radius to the center, which is God. In other terms, a guide leads UP. In reality, the Truth is inside us; there's no separation between people; but in the Next World, we will see one another

112 There is a fish in India, which lives at the bottom of the sea, and swims in mud—while being totally unaffected by it. That fish remains clean, because its body is covered with a protective, slippery fluid!

as "fused;" but not "con-fused:" The Prophet said: "You will be with those you love."

The poor circle that loved a line above

Once upon a time,
A circle fell so madly in love:
The poor thing loved a line that led above!
A great metaphysician (Abdul Majid) said:
"You don't exist, and neither does he;
There's only the center: You listen to me!"
That circle said, "Oh fie and fee"
I'll go right on a lovin that line
Right up till I, my own Self, see!

Another once upon a time,
A magnet lived in a china shop;
Yet, come what may it pointed up!
Now why was that? A mystery tiz:
Not even Abdul Majid could answer that quiz!
Both the circle and the magnet love Abdul Majid too,
Yet who can love anybody like I love you!

Then I got reproached! I love people; but there are many kinds of lines that lead above, like the Quran, blessings upon the Prophet, teachings... So I changed my tune on a *dime*—deciding to love every *line:*

The poor circle that loved the <u>lines</u> that lead above

Once upon a time,
A circle fell so madly in love:
The poor thing loved the lines that lead above!
Yea, twas only once, and within space and time;
But those weren't just ANY lines:
They all led right UP to Heaven above!
That's WHY the circle fell so madly in love!
Just ONCE it happened, far DOWN in limited time;
But twill last forever (in sha Allah): The circle will love those lines!

It had a great problem, you may not see:
That circle had no way to go, without those lines:
High up, was indescribable Non-Du-al-i-ty;
But the circle knew not by nature: It could not see.

Those lines are all on the Sirat ul-Mus-ta-qim,
So the circle was right: Twas NOT only a dream:
But NOW that circle gets along just fine:
ALL it needed was good straight lines!

Traveling in the realms of Truth

Here comes a controversial subject and I'll only walk into it with Ibn Arabi and the Bibliography by my side. But first of all, who am I talking to? "You" are Everyone; so sometimes I'm talking to some of you and not others. The kind of "traveling" below, concerns Muslims who are highly educated; but you're all welcome to come along! Some of you, Muslims or not, are *more* than highly educated: You're the élite among intellectuals; and you've been my "pals" since I was 17. Although I'm not like you in type of intelligence, you've helped me learn lifelong. I'm profoundly grateful, and trying to share what I learned, especially with you. In the Bibliography, there are two books (and one isn't out yet) but those two books are like open doors—giving you, my heirs, the best of what I've found of treasures. They are also the intellectuals' complEment to my own limitations. I mean *Precious meanings & attainment of hopes, from the outpouring of Sidi Abu al-Abbas al-Tijani* by Al-Khalifah Ali Harazim b. al-Arabi Barradah al-Fasi, translated by Talut b. Suleiman Dawood al-Tijani and *L'ouverture divine* by Muhammad ibn Abdallah at-Tisfawi, traduit par Paolo Urizzi (not yet published as of 2020). Those will make some of you realize why I've been writing poems! The article, "*Ibn Arabi et la question du pluralisme religieux*" is also pertinent.

Many of you are Christians, so I'd like to tell you something before turning to Muslims and approaching all revelations. Us Muslims *must* believe in Jesus Christ, His miraculous birth, His miracles, the greatness of the Virgin Mary, the Prophets of the Old Testament—it's endless; and that belief is included in verses we recite almost daily. But one line in the Bible resonates in my heart: "(Jesus) said, 'To this end was I born, and for this came I into the world, to bear witness unto the Truth. *Everyone that is of the truth* hears my voice.'" (John 18:37–38). "After Jesus said that, Pilate went and told the Jews, 'I find in Him no fault at all.'" *Everyone* on the side of Truth, must recognize the Truth in Jesus. The issues as to whether some lines in Scriptures may have been changed,

do not apply to the basic fact that we *must* believe in Jesus Christ, and both the Quran and the ahadith confirm that repeatedly. Not all Muslims can't read or think; but they sure aren't alone!

Now, although the school of Perennialism (with a capital P, founded by Frithjof Schuon) is rife with heresies, there is, *in deepest reality*, no real difference between any of God's revelations—and every apparent contradiction between religions can be explained; but the explanations cannot be understood by everyone, nor does anyone who knows, necessarily go into the details in explaining. Those who know, will only explain a few glaring differences. You see, "There can be no change in the Words of Allah" (لا تبديلا لكلمات الله), this is indeed the supreme success." (Quran, 10:64).

He has spoken in revelation, in different forms, at different times and to different kinds of people. The Islamic doctrine, that there is only one religion, is full of meaning: That religion is Islam, because the word Islam means "submission to God," however that may be expressed.

There is not the slightest contradiction between exotericism and esoterism either. That's expressed by the saying I've told you about: "There is no Tariqah without Shariah." (There is no secret, Divine Knowledge, without the Sacred Law). Everything I've said up above, comes pretty much from Ibn Arabi (with possible errors by me; but wait till you read the quotes)!

In those last two paragraphs above, I have given some of you, one of the best things it has taken me a lifetime to learn. You can see why I love so many people (more than most), why I have Christian and Hindu adopted sisters, and why I love traveling among the religious worlds. There are, however, many possible objections: I can hear them coming, from some others among you, who are Muslims. And some of your objections are correct: An essential fact is missing so far.

Again, I can only talk to some of you at a time; but here's the reply to Muslims, who know that Islam is the final religion, and that Muhammad is the Seal of Prophets: All religions/traditions are nothing but the "Perennial Religion" (*al-dīn al-qā'im*) of Muhammad. Muslims who object to that are just bound to the historical form of the "Muhammadan Community" (*al-Ummah al-Muhammadiyyah*); however, the legislative function of the Prophet is primordial: "Truly I was [already], in the sight of Allah, a Prophet, when Adam was still between water and clay." (كنت نبيا ولا آدم ولا ماء ولا طين) I shall inform you of the meaning (*ta'wil*) of this. It is the supplication of my father Ibrahim (Abraham; Quran, 2:129) and the glad tidings of my brother `Isa (Jesus) to his people (Quran, 61:6); and the vision my mother saw the night I was delivered: She saw a light that lit the palaces of Syro-Palestine so that she could see them." (Narrated by Tabarani, Musnad al-Shamiyyin).

So: Muhammad *precedes* Adam—not to mention all the other Prophets, who came after Adam. They are only "substitutes" (*nuwwāb*) for Muhammad, *as is clearly explained by Ibn Arabi in Chapter 10 of the Futuhat.*

So what? Shouldn't the different forms of the Muhammadan Law during human history have any validity if they all came from God through the Spirit of Muhammad? If they are abrogated (*mansūkha*) they are abrogated only due to the authority of the Prophet who brought the previous religion. That authority—albeit Prophetic and True—was lost at the time of the coming of Muhammad. Nonetheless, the "saving reality" of the message they brought is still "alive" *due to the authority of Muhammad*, because all revealed Laws are nothing but his Law, and at the time of his manifestation, all authority returned to him. (Again, see Ibn Arabi's Futuhat, Chapter 10). God contained and still contains them from the very beginning and to Him everything returns, like rivers in the sea, at the end of the Prophetic cycle. Think of the motions of the sea and clouds, the rain and the rivers: The *water* is always the same, starting from the sea and returning to the sea, which is none other than the Haqîqah al-Muhammadiyyah.

When you or I (whoever we are) love to read the lives of saints in any religion, that's because those saints had perfect souls, and it's too obvious that they were people of Paradise or Heaven. You saw me before: Whether I read about a Russian Orthodox saint, in *The Way of a Pilgrim*; or about the Catholic saint, Rose of Lima (whose life made me weep in distress when I wrongly thought that the Quran denied the Crucifixion), or about the Buddhist saint Honen Shonin[113] whatever saint you or I love, we are inspired by a perfect, saved soul. That was why I ran away from home, to sell a diamond pin and invoke the Jesus Prayer. *Later*, I'd find everything in the Shahadah of Islam; but *back then*, the Shahadah was less clear than what I saw in front of me at each moment.

Salman the Persian, recognized Christianity immediately, only from hearing chants when he was passing a church, after he had been raised as a Zoroastrian. Then he followed a Christian monk, who was greedy and a fraud—finally finding luminous Christians, who told him about the coming of a Prophet, who would be found in a land full of palm trees. That Prophet would have a "seal" at a certain place on his back; and he would accept gifts, but nothing given in charity. After being tricked and sold as a slave, Salman is taken to Medina, where his master makes him work in his date palm orchard. Soon, Salman hears that a Prophet has arrived! Salman takes something as charity to Muhammad, and something else as a gift: Then he looks at the Prophet's back and sees the predicted "seal of Prophecy" on his back! Later, the Prophet puts his hand on Salman's thigh, and says: "Salman is of my family!" This is one of many stories about the lives of Muhammad's companions, who had

113 Honen's life was the inspiration for the name, "Swachamina Village," as Swachamina is a word for The Pure Land, the Heaven of Pure Land in Buddhism.

unbelievably difficult trials before becoming Muslims. No matter where they started, they found the Truth![114]

Let's go back to Ibn Arabi, the greatest Shaykh of Islam, and see what he means in another passage of the Futuhat (Chapter 3,153.12) when he wrote:

> "All the revealed religions (*shara'i'*) are lights. Among these religions, the revealed religion of Muhammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun. Their being hidden is like the abrogation of the other revealed religions that takes place through Muhammad's revealed religion. Nevertheless, they do in fact exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized. This explains why we have been required in our all-inclusive religion to have faith in the Truth of all the Messengers and all the revealed religions. They are not rendered null (*batil*) by abrogation. That is the opinion of the ignorant." (Translated by William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds,* p. 125)

Now back to false "Perennialism:" It is true in a way, that the so-called Perennialist School was founded by Frithjof Schuon, because "Perennialism" is the Anglo-Saxon version of the "traditionalist" school founded by René Guénon. But, there is a risk in saying anything like that without explaining something essential: Most people will get confused and think that "traditional thought" as a whole, has its foundation in Frithjof Schuon. That's precisely what he wanted to get away with: He wanted to put his name on the highest Truth, which teaches us that "in deepest reality" there is no difference between the different traditional forms! The real spokesmen for the traditionalist school *in recent times* (the doctrine is Eternal), were René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and several other fine authors.

What Frithjof Schuon did was only to vulgarise this thought, render it heretical, make it popular, and make it a "movement," dubbed "Perennialism" (with a capital P). It is not just considered "heretical" by me, but by *all* orthodox Sufis, because it actually originated with Frithjof Schuon—not God! The movement, pretended to be *higher* than *all* of God's revelations, just as its presumed spokesman himself claimed to be *higher* than *all* the Prophets sent by God. You've seen throughout what has happened: A form of megalomania got into the highest realms of Truth. Frithjof Schuon wanted to appropriate, to own, universal esoterism!

114 Salman was by far not the only one to learn about the coming Prophet from learned Christians and Jews. Moses predicted his coming in the Old Testament, and it is easy to see that he meant someone after Jesus Christ. Jesus knew about him perfectly and there were Christians and Jews at the time of Muhammad, who had heard about the coming Prophet and the signs by which he could be recognized. This is a vast subject; but anyone willing to keep learning, can find answers in the Bibliography.

I just used the word "movement." That word represents something which comes and goes, doesn't last. Schuon wrote against that whole concept; but he wrote for and against a lot of things which he belied in fact. What he created *was* a "movement," because he himself created it, according to his image. Everything passes away except what God decrees should last. God says in the Quran: "And say, 'Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed falsehood is (by nature), ever bound to depart.'" (Quran, 17:81).

Now I have been telling you throughout, that I myself love all religions; I do *not* want to be tied up! But some of you, my fellow Muslims, may be quite discombobulated by that, and I understand you: There are reasons for your not concerning yourself with more than the final revelation, *because* it includes all that came before. Whole books have been written about this; but let me refer again to the greatest Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Arabi, whose words I love. He wrote:

> "Beware of becoming delimited by a specific creed and disbelieving in everything else, lest great good escape you... Be in yourself a matter for the forms of all beliefs, for God is wider and more tremendous than that He should be constricted by one creed rather than another." (Fusus, 113)

> "He who counsels his own soul should investigate, during his life in this world, all doctrines concerning God. He should learn from whence each possessor of a doctrine affirms the validity of his doctrine. Once its validity has been affirmed for him in the specific mode in which it is correct for him who holds it, then he should support it in the case of him who believes in it." (Futuhat II 85.11)

I am also reminded of a hadith: "Wisdom is the lost property of the believer: Wherever he finds it, he has the right to it." That means, as does everything above, that if I find Truth in Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam—I have the right to benefit from it.

Another version of the above hadith means: A wise word is the heritage of the whole of humankind. One should acquire wisdom wherever it is found. You too should be open to acquiring wisdom from people of other faiths and cultures too, because *any truth, no matter where it is found, is from God.*

> "Thus, for Ibn al-'Arabī, the degree of one's knowledge of God is directly related to the degree to which one can recognize the Real in all of its various forms. That is, the degree to which one can transcend or go beyond one's own subjective conception of reality, one's 'god' created in belief. This can only be achieved through following one who has already transcended these limitations, and worshipping his absolutely unconditioned object of worship. For Ibn Arabi, the Prophet Muhammad is the example par excellence of one who has an infinitely receptive heart which recognizes God in all of His manifestations, and so, one hoping

> for 'knowledge of things as they are' must follow his example." (William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*)

That paragraph above expresses the true perennialism I love, so much, that when I fell upon it—having no idea what page it was on—I wanted to sing, which I cannot do, so I wrote another poem to Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani. He is the spiritual master for the end time, meaning that one of his roles is to show the Truth in all previous religions. It is also a *fact* that I myself was decreed to be his disciple.

The morning dew

I never did like diamonds:
I prefer the morning dew.
And ne'r had I a treasure,
That I loved as much as you.

Thou art a summit of true guidance:
Ah that is oh so fine,
I cannot enough love it;
But why shouldst THOU be mine?

Me thinks that if I saw all Shuyukh
A standing in a line—
ALL who have existed, back from begin of time,
Allah: Twas HE, Who did Decree it:
Twas THEE who should be mine!

Yet there is still a question
That harps upon my mind:
Art thou but an in-sti-tu-tion?
Me thinks 'tis a bit blind!
I see thee as a perfect person,
The belove'd com-pan-i-on of mine.

There are holy lands to visit,
Divine Realities to see:

I'm dying to travel in ALL the worlds—
To see them ALL, along with thee!

True perennialism is *in*, not *above* the final religion, which includes all religions. It is not above any other revelation either. Here's Gregory A. Lipton talking. He's a fine present-day scholar of Ibn Arabi, and he compared Ibn Arabi's Gnosis to the heretical ideas of Frithjof Schuon, in his book, *Rethinking Ibn Arabi*:

> "If, then, we permit ourselves to speak of a so-called perennial religion or Religio perennis according to Ibn Arabi, we can only do so within the hierarchical confines of his all-encompassing Muhammadan prophetology, where Muhammad—and the attendant idea of the primordial Muhammadan Reality—is projected as the alpha and omega of all historical prophets and their revealed laws." (*Rethinking Ibn Arabi,* p.15)

However, the question of true Perennialism has answers from several present-day scholars. Gregory A. Lipton, quoted above, is *one* of them.[115] His views and words are absolutely orthodox and true, and his scholarship was essential to tie up and then discard all kinds of false perennialism, like that of Frithjof Schuon.

William C. Chittick, *also* a leading scholar on Ibn Arabi, proves with quotes from Ibn Arabi—quotes that I've put above for you all—that Ibn Arabi absolutely believed it was *tremendously* advantageous for us, spiritually, to accept the Truth wherever it is found, and not to be bound by any one religion. Now scholars are to be greatly honored; but they are only scholars (although many Gnostic saints have been scholars too; and these very scholars may become saints).They learn from discursive thought and reason; but great scholars may also be inspired—even to represent a valid point of view rather than the Truth as seen from "The top of the mountain," as taught by God. The best scholars of Gnosticism can be *really* intelligent; they have a *gnostic* intelligence; and one should approach them with exquisite good manners (*aadaab*, in Arabic). Does anyone mind if I take away a capital letter though? A very great scholar may be a gnostic; but he could learn from a Gnostic. *Both* Lipton and Chittick are right (but God knows best), and إختلاف العلماء رحمة (The differences among those who know are a blessing).[116]

Islam *is* the final religion, and Muhammad *is* the final Messenger. The concept of "final" means a "Seal." When a letter was sealed by a king, it could not be opened by anyone until it reached its final destination. The idea is that the

115 If no one minds (and even if they do) I happen to have a special love for Gregory Lipton, who I've never met. God causes the strangest loves. *He* gave me a brother I only heard of when I was 80 years old!

116 Although there are various versions of this, the basic idea applies to different levels of knowledge and the origin of the sentence comes from several directions.

Seal is final and self-sufficient (needing nothing outside it); but it *also includes* all that came before. And previous religions have been abrogated; *but they still exist*, like stars when the sun rises. According to Ibn Arabi, we should get to know about all that God has said and done. If Muslims don't want to know about other than Islam, then that's all right; but on the Last Day they will see less well than those who explored the realms of Truth. (And oh how I long to see Jesus Christ, and all the Prophets, saints and good people I've read about)!

Finally: There are probably some points about which Lipton is better anchored than Chittick; but there may be others where Chittick has seen further. If you are those concerned, you'll see for yourselves after further reading. Now I feel rich because I've learned that much, so I rejoice, and would share my happiness with those of you who love to "travel" in the "realms of Truth."

No more moon in the sky!

I told you how all the beloved moons in my universe *set.* And my tears flowed again, leaving me *wet.* I was no longer "a man in religion." A Muqaddam had told me that I wouldn't lose those I love in "leaving the cosmos;" but then I remembered something else he had *said,* and what I'd *read.* And I'm weeping now, because something isn't quite *true:*

There IS no "ME,"
And there IS no "YOU!"
Those moons, those guides I'd been writing TO:
Someday I'll SEE,
That they're all just the same as ME
Because nothing exists in realiTY... except God.
The sun HAS set, and the moon has TOO:
Allahumma, all this time, I've been loving YOU!

With only one foot in the Truth, and one still in error, my wrong foot remembers a poet, who described how I feel at my worst:

Heart! We will forget him!

Heart! We will forget him!
You and I—tonight!
You must forget the warmth he gave—
I will forget the light!
When you have done pray tell me,
That I may straight begin!

Haste! lest while you are lagging
I may remember him!

(Emily Dickinson)

What I go through is like what happens to most people when a beloved person dies, or when he is himself upon the brink of death: It seems as if one is losing all one loves! But my distress is due to an illusion that I still have. I *know* that only God exists and that our existence is nothing compared to His; but I don't *realize* that yet. The only thing left in the universe, that I still care about are those realized people I met; but I keep waking up to the fact that only God exists!

And, if you haven't noticed: I'm a fairly talented, well-traveled and cultivated woman. So guess what else I finally realized (at this level, yes: I do realize something at a low level): None of that is worth anything at all! Some of the greatest realized people never left home. One lived on a small hill his whole life; another on a mountain... and yet they knew all there is to know. The "aristocratic" ways and taste, the talents that fooled me lifelong—are all gone!

Muhammad really did love his wives: The stories are *true;* but each one sees from his point of *view.* We will *see* and *be* with those we loved. A man asked the Prophet about the Hour (i.e. Day of Judgment) saying, "When will the Hour be?" The Prophet said, "What have you prepared for it?" The man said, "Nothing, except that I love Allah and His Apostle." The Prophet said, "You will be with those whom you love." We had never been so glad as we were on hearing that saying of the Prophet i.e. "You will be with those whom you love."

حَدَّثَنَا سُلَيْمَانُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ ثَابِتٍ، عَنْ أَنَسٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّ رَجُلاً، سَأَلَ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم عَنِ السَّاعَةِ، فَقَالَ مَتَى السَّاعَةُ قَالَ " وَمَاذَا أَعْدَدْتَ لَهَا ". قَالَ لاَ شَىْءَ إِلاَّ أَنِّي أُحِبُّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ صلى الله عليه وسلم. فَقَالَ " أَنْتَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ". قَالَ أَنَسٌ فَمَا فَرِحْنَا بِشَىْءٍ فَرَحَنَا بِقَوْلِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم " أَنْتَ مَعَ مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ". قَالَ أَنَسٌ فَأَنَا أُحِبُّ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَأَبَا بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ، وَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ مَعَهُمْ بِحُبِّي إِيَّاهُمْ، وَإِنْ لَمْ أَعْمَلْ بِمِثْلِ أَعْمَالِهِمْ.
(Sahih al-Bukhari, 3688)

"Therefore, I love the Prophet, Abu Bakr and `Umar, and I hope that I will be with them because of my love for them though my deeds are not similar to theirs." That means I'll see Prophets and Gnostic saints; but I will realize (God willing) that we are all existing in God and our qualities are only reflections of His.

After being anxious about separation from Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani in *this* world, I went back to realizing that I would see him, even as a person,

and I could be totally devoted to him *both* as my Shaykh, and also as a perfect human being:

A veil went to Fez?
Or was it you?

A Song of Love for the
Human Perfection of
Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani

Pray tell me Sir: Who was that?
A veil moved to Fez, or was it you?
I've read this in letters and books;
But let me take a closer look:
If I could see only Allah like you,
The Seal of Prophets,
And all of Truth too—
And all that is:
Then where would I find you?

Now I'm not sure how to apply it; but I read in a book,
That when the sun comes up,
One should see all that's there, take a close look:
The stars are still there; people must be too,
So don't forget, oh my heart: Stand up!
When you see all there is: Say "I love you too"—
"And just the way I used to do."

After The Last Day, when the Prophet we'll see,
With thee, the Sun of Gnosis, upon thy minbar too—
And Gnostics around thee, (I pray even me):
Then I'll see you!

For ANY Guide who's a transparent veil[117]

117 A true spiritual master must be like a transparent veil, through which one sees God and His last Prophet, Muhammad; he also approaches human perfection; and according to the Prophet, Shaykh Ahmad at-Tijani was spiritually and humanly perfect. Therefore he is eminently worthy of love. The reason that I have addressed this poem to someone I call "Sir," is that I had read a conversation between a great Hindu

I'd die, so write "Died" on my tombstone:
"End of her life and tale."

My Shaykh went to Fez in burnous clad
To live evermore: his tomb is right there:
That story so dear made me oh so glad!
My heart stands up before every Truth
That comes from you;
Yet, I'm in love with the one who went to Fez too!

Pray tell me Sir: Who was that?
A VEIL went to Egypt, or was it YOU?
I do ADORE TRUE GUIDES…
I'd die for ANY Guide ANY day.
That's nothing new: Everyone's said it;
And it's what I always say.
What doesn't bother me at all is separation;
Yet what, beloved Sir, is the meaning of this situation?

Jalal ud-Din Rumi, the most famous Persian poet spoke about love, and you can see that he knew about what exists and what love is too. Being a realized person, he spoke more about the lack of separation between people than I do: "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along." And: "Don't grieve. Anything you lose comes round in another form." And: "This is how I would die into the love I have for you: as pieces of cloud dissolve in sunlight."

I know there is no separation between myself and those I love; but I don't realize that yet, so I'm pretty wrapped up in loving people, who still seem separate. They *are* different; they sort of exist; I can love them; but we are all one in God.

What is the Truth with a Capital T?

Lifelong, you've seen me fall in love—with any ideal person, then anyone intelligent, then anyone who talked about God. Then here, in this chapter, you see me *fighting* with the Truth that it's always Allah we love. I kept *insisting*

spiritual master, named Yajnavalkia, and his wife, Maitreyi. He instructs her about the highest doctrines, before leaving his life in the world. In the English translation, she calls him "Sir." See Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, chapter 2.

upon loving Muqaddams; and I fall madly in love with my true Shaykh, who died in 1815! Actually I was even a bit jealous when I heard that many believers have thousands of celestial maidens! Then I understood why! Those maidens love Allah, and so do I—the way I did when I first heard of Him at age 17. But after that I kept loving people; well, one always does; but one loves people *because* one sees Him in them and them in Him. There's only One real Cause, one Truth, one Reality! So here's the last poem I wrote for my beloved Shaykh. It's the conclusion of my love life, my search for Truth in human love:

The heart of an artichoke

There was a simple lay-dee
No one special twas at tall
But once she got a letter: Ay!
That lay-dee took a fall!
A letter got she about a darling,
Who made her for-get all.
The past and future ceased to be;
The cosmos left…
…And all she saw…
…Twas HE!

Yet he was so important: Ay yay!
He was the sun of Gnosis in the night!
That didn't even phase her…
He could have been but candle light!
Twas all that lay-dee need-ed
To find her way by night.

Now when someone loves too many,
A heart of artichoke has he.
A leaf is for one lay-dee;
Then lo! His heart's for three!
Then not at all: A billion MORE has he!
He loves too many Awliya,
Alive are some, yet others in the dim.

Billions of celestial maidens too
Are ALL in love with him!

Thou hast a heart of artichoke:
A leaf is for each lay-dee in the deen;
And each leaf: oh my darling, it is so very green!
Yet I shall be dee-lighted
If I've not one leaf from thee—
My heart is thine, forever, cause
Tis Allah I love in thee!
And He's the One Who's EV-RYwhere:
There's NOTHING else but HE!

When I first heard those words, "the Truth with a capital T," I didn't even know God existed, or that He is the absolute Truth, the Good, the Beautiful, the Creator, the Almighty...[118] After class, my professor told me that *God* was the Truth; but then I spent a lifetime thrashing about in the ocean, trying to get a hold of the Truth. After finding out that religions are ways to return to Him, I choose the final religion, Islam, because I read about it and everything told me that I had to be a Muslim. That decision led to infinite spiritual blessings, but also to trouble in this world. There were marvelous compensations—even in the world, and I'm not complaining about anything—no, I'm absolutely delighted!

It didn't even dawn upon me until age 80, that to *really* know the Truth, one must have spiritual realization; and a person who has spiritual realization is *exactly* like someone who can *see*, when everyone else is blind. This truth has infinite results; but the first one that comes to mind is that one must believe and follow those who can *see*. I hadn't quite understood that lifelong; but as soon as I did, I wanted to *see* the Truth of God myself, and in the meantime, of course I decided that I had to follow those who can see. I still do argue a bit, even fight (albeit I know I've lost before starting), because from the point of view of someone who can*not* see like me, it's so very hard to accept what *all* seeing people have said, in *all* religions, and at *all* times. One *knows* what is true; but one has to fight with one's limited ideas to believe it. And one has to actually *do* things one knows are in accord with sight, when one doesn't actually see anything oneself. In a very real way, that *doing* without sight, is faith; and it's the whole spiritual life, with infinite degrees. In Islam, saying the five ritual prayers on time, is an elementary example.

118 These are some of the 99 Beautiful Divine Names of God in Islam. Those Names are actually countless and are the descriptions of His qualities or Attributes.

Learning that was an enormous task; but not my only problem: I didn't know that I already had the Truth in the Shahadah, which I had first said at age 20, in that locked room, upstairs in Harvard University Library! I ran all around Robin Hood's Barn—losing a lifetime in a false Tariqah that pretended to be *above* Islam, before seeing that I had the Truth the whole time *in* Islam! Well, I'd known the bare bones of the doctrine; but not what it really meant; and even realizing the literal Truth of the doctrine, to forget spiritual realization for the moment, was yet another giant step.

The whole Truth is in the complete Shahadah, of Unity and of Prophecy. You Muslims have seen me stumbling around lifelong, among all religions, hardly knowing the difference between one religion and another. I got that from the false School of Perennialism; but with a different modus vivendi, I still adore traveling among religions, find them to be absolutely precious, and actually *need* to travel. To an infinitely lesser degree, I love traveling among races, nations and cultures. Not everyone *needs* to travel; but those who don't are missing an immense good. That's what Ibn Arabi said, not me.

So the Truth is God Himself, and it's in the Shahadah; but what else is there? I have to repeat the image of the ocean and its waves: Us human beings, and all of creation—are all like waves upon the ocean. Only the ocean is totally real: Creation has a reality too; but like the waves, it is nothing in itself. And even when we have virtues and gifts, intelligence or genius, that comes from Him. We may notice that we have a quality, but must always be aware of the fact that it comes from Him.

So who can know the Truth about God but Himself? We cannot know Him, as He is incomprehensible to other than Himself, *so* He created a "Light" or a "Mirror" before He created the cosmos. That was the pre-historic nature of Muhammad, who was once asked, "What is the first thing God created?" His answer was, "The Light of your Prophet." Now Light is the symbol of Truth. That means that Muhammad himself *is* the Truth, and that is probably surprising even to most Muslims. However, both the Quran and a hadith confirm that. The hadith is: "He who has seen me, has certainly seen the Truth (Al-Haqq)." مَنْ رَآنِي فَقَدْ رَأَى الْحَقّ (Sahih Bukhari, Book 91, Hadith 15).

That is often interpreted by adding some words *that are not there*: "in a dream:" He who has seen me *in a dream* has certainly seen the Truth. Both interpretations are true—as is proven by other ahadith and Quranic verses.

The Quran's verse, which is always mis-translated into European languages, is Surah Muhammad, verse 2: "And those who believe and do righteous deeds and believe in what has been sent down upon Muhammad—and he is the Truth (al-Haqq) from their Lord—*He* (God) will remove from them their misdeeds and amend their condition." وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ (Quran, 47:2). That Arabic word is *huwa*, meaning "he." The word is not *dhalika,* meaning "it." What has been

sent down upon (revealed to) Muhammad is also the Truth: That's obvious; but there is no way to deny that this verse must also mean that Muhammad, is *himself* the Truth. In Christianity, Jesus represents the Truth. Jesus said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."

How then can *we* know God? Obviously He is so great that only He can know Himself. We can only know Him through Muhammad, who is the Truth. We can know because the Prophet is inside us, guiding us. "And know that *among you* is the Messenger of Allah. If he were to obey you in much of the matter, you would be in difficulty, but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided..." *No*: That *too* is a mis-translation! The words mean "Know that the Messenger of God is *within* you (delivering revelation, teaching you from within)." (Quran, 49:7). All these mis-interpretations come from the fact that the Truth *really is* hard to find; and there are not many who have found it in our times. My writing all this for you is a testimony, my Last Testament, because you need to know some things.

The whole Truth is that God witnesses His Unity through us by means of His Messenger, who is in us. This is the beginning and the end of all sacred knowledge and of universal inspiration and eternal revelation. There is nothing to be said after that.

Appendix I
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PROOF

Appendix II
Letters from René Guénon Concerning Frithjof Schuon

1 – Letter from René Guénon to Louis Caudron, Cairo, 17 October 1950

What is certainly the worst about this whole affair is the progressive "de-Islamization" of the tarîqah, which is also denied like everything else, but which is unfortunately only too obvious; what you (and I, of course) call "a tarîqah worthy of the name", they dismissively call "an ordinary tarîqah" or "a tarîqah like all the others"; as I replied to A. B., I would very much like us to deal with an ordinary tarîqah, and not a vague organization with 'universalist' pretensions, which, if this continues, will soon no longer be a tarîqah at all. As for the reduction of rituals to a minimum, I suspected that, but from what you tell me, I see that it goes much further than I could have imagined; it goes without saying that, since what I wrote on this subject 15 years ago, I have not changed my mind at all. Basically, there as for everything else, there is a truly incredible lack of technical knowledge; and it is certainly not with so-called "inspired" fantasies that we can make up for it! Surely, S. M[ustafa] has seen all the anomalies, and that is what will never be forgiven him; they call this the "spirit of contradiction"…

2 – Letter to another correspondent: Cairo, 9 October 1950

When we bring all these things together, we are much less surprised that the situation has arrived day after day at the point where it is now; in any case, they cannot blame me for having lacked patience by saying nothing and even constantly trying to fix everything for so long!

I did not believe that it was at this point, and I see that I was only too right when I said that soon it would no longer be at all a tarîqah, but a

vague "universalist" organization, more or less in the manner of that of the disciples of Vîvêkânanda!

Sincerely yours,

René Guénon

3 – Charles-André Gilis, Note de lecture sur le numéro hors série de Connaissance des Religions en hommage à Frithjof Schuon – Vers la Tradition, n°79, Mars-Avril-Mai 2000).

When Michel Vâlsan, in full agreement with René Guénon with whom he maintained a close relationship, declared his independence from Frithjof Schuon, he sent him a long letter (more than twenty pages in small print) setting out the reasons for the break-up. This document, which can be described without exaggeration as masterly, reveals an incomparable science of the functions and rules of initiation; one would seek in vain the slightest equivalent in the work of Frithjof Schuon (This science is the prerogative of the greatest. Apart from Michel Vâlsan, only René Guénon and Ibn Arabi referred to it). Mr. Aymard, who knows very well that this letter is unpublished, notably for legal reasons, takes advantage of it to hide its nature by reducing questions of principle to considerations of an individual nature: "Not without passion, Vâlsan sends him a long indictment in the form of an epistle and admonitions which deeply hurts him". (Cf. p. 40) All those who had the privilege of reading this decisive letter know that it was not hurtful, neither in its tone nor in its intention; on the contrary, it was very deferential in its form and showed great traditional scruples. The same tendentious presentation is found in the rest of the text (Cf. p. 41) "A few years later—in 1958—Michel Vâlsan went to Lausanne and, in a gesture of superb humility, apologized for everything that had happened (it is we who underline) before proposing to reintegrate his group". We categorically reject this insinuation. The above-mentioned letter refers to fundamental principles from which Michel Vâlsan never deviated, however little, until the end of his life, because they directly related to his own function. Mr. Aymard's process is misleading and suspicious. (Misleading because it conceals; suspicious because certain passages in its text—which, unlike the one we have just quoted, can be easily verified—are approximate or even completely inaccurate…)

4 – Letter from René Guénon: Cairo, 27 September 1950

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter, which came to me yesterday. Allow me to say first of all, that you have been very wrong not to dare to write to me so far, because I assure you that I am not one of those who surround themselves with ceremonies and to whom one can address only through intermediaries!

During the incidents of 1946, and in spite of all that I had already noticed as being unfortunate even before that, I still thought that everything could be arranged, and it seemed to me that your submission could only contribute to it; but, to tell you the truth, I regretted it by seeing how much it has been abused afterwards. Since then, as before, I have remained silent for as long as I could, and for the same reasons, despite all the more or less extravagant things that I have too often had the opportunity to observe; but that has not served any purpose either, and even I have realised that some people too willingly interpreted this silence as approval. Finally, there came a moment, as you know, when, despite all my good will for conciliation, it was no longer possible for me to maintain this attitude, and when I had to intervene, in a way in spite of myself, in this question of Christianity which was at least the apparent starting point of the current crisis (I say apparent because, in reality, this seems to be only the continuation of the one of 1946 which had never really been resolved). It is now quite clear that there is no longer any hope that the situation will ever improve, and it is certain that this could not continue indefinitely…

Naturally, I already knew from Vâlsan what you thought of all this, and I thank you for having kindly confirmed it to me yourself. As for those who are hesitant or who are even now siding with Switzerland, their case is obviously explained by all the fantastic assertions that have been repeated to them to satiety and in which they still believe; but it is to be feared that one day or another they will end up feeling cruel disillusions… In Switzerland, doctrinal knowledge seems very weak among all, despite their "jnânic" claims; from a technical point of view, their ignorance in this respect is hardly believable, and the most unfortunate thing is that they imagine that it is possible to supplement it by so-called "inspirations" which are too obviously outside any traditional regularity. There would be too much to say about all this, but I do not insist on it any more, because I think that Vâlsan keeps you informed of what is most important in our correspondence. I am pleased with your complete agreement with him; there is in him a doctrinal background much more solid than in the Swiss, including their Master, and I fully agree with your appreciation in this regard. I was glad to hear that you had already started to meet independently; no matter what attitude we take on the other side (and I hardly hope that we resign ourselves to

an "amicable" separation), you certainly do not have to worry about a question of "regularity" that no longer even arises under these conditions, and which, moreover, would have no more reason for you to ask yourself vis-à-vis Lausanne than for Lausanne itself vis-à-vis Mostaganem, because there is no real difference there, and this has absolutely nothing to do with the value that one can wrongly or rightly attribute to such or such individuality… The essential thing is to have a really normal Tarîqah, what is disdainfully called in Switzerland "a Tarîqah like all the others" what a pity that some did not want to be satisfied with it!

Please believe, dear Sir, in my cordial sentiments.

R. G.

PROOF

Appendix III
A Quote From a Letter Written by Frithjof Schuon, in 1953

Here is an extract from a letter written by Frithjof Schuon, in 1953 (after René Guénon had realized what was wrong), and published in a book of his collected writings, called *De tout coeur et en l'esprit.* A great genius is describing himself, but in thinking that he is talking about another imaginary person, who has gone astray!

When I read the letter below, about the faults, illusions and pride of ANOTHER PERSON, I thought there is no end to the ruses or tricks of the devil when he gets free reign in oneself, like what Frithjof Schuon gave him! What is pertinent, is not my reaction though. What's interesting is the insight of an exceedingly great spiritual master, the Qutb of his age, Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani. He said: "If a breach takes place in your respect for the limits (the sacred laws, the decrees of God) then know that you have been seduced, and have become a puppet in which demons play. Return to the status of the Law (shar`) and turn away from the opinions suggested by passion." [Shaykh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, in Access to the Mystery – 40th speech: When is the sâlik able to join the group of spiritual beings? p.177]

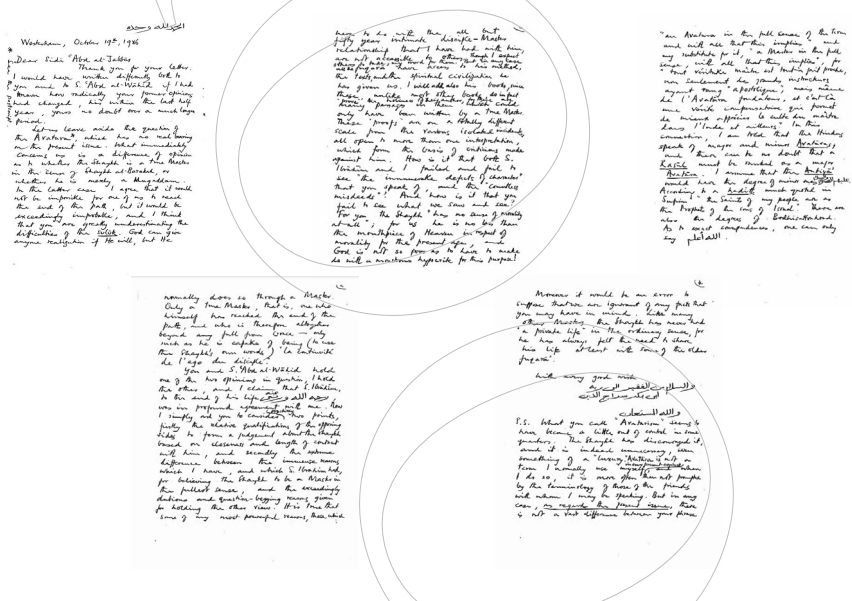
Shaykh Abdul Qadir also said: "Any Truth (Haqîqa) to which the Law (Shari`â) does not bear witness is only debauchery (zandaqa). And Allah is most Knowing! ... (Take the) Path towards the True (Al-Haqq) by flapping the wings of the Quran and the Sunnah. And present yourself before Him, hand in hand with the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing of God upon him." [Shaykh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, in Al-Fath Ar-Rabbânî wal-Fayd Ar-Rahmânî, The Lordly Opening and the Manna of the Merciful, p.29].

Remember that we are speaking of someone who broke countless laws of his religion, taking the wives of his neighbor-disciples, mixing religions, drinking wine, lying, changing the Sacred Law, claiming that his disciples should follow his ways and not those of the Prophet of Islam. Now here's what Frithjof Schuon wrote so genially, about his own self:

"It is absurd to believe in the devil and, whenever he manifests himself—taking advantage most of the time of a given situation—to deny that he is at stake... it is also necessary to take into account the fact that there are men who secretly shelter a serious defect which they cover with a brilliant bookish wisdom or a more or less unconscious hypocrisy, until the defect repressed in a corner ends up bursting because it has not been dissolved in humility but brushed with pride; it bursts with all the more violence that it had covered itself with the sacred and not mere worldliness... It depends on whether virtue or defect is on the surface or in the nucleus of man... in any case you have to be very careful in judging the faults of others and relentless in judging your own weaknesses... Besides, virtue mixed with bitterness is always worthless; bitterness is equivalent to spiritual death. There is a great danger there for the aging man: he willingly makes others responsible for his youthful illusions, and out of bitterness then falls into even greater errors... we often lose sight of the fact that we disappoint others too, because it is in human nature that we are largely insensitive to our own defects."

Appendix IV

Letter from Martin Lings to Victor Danner (Sidi Abd al-Jabbar)



الحمد لله وحده

Westerham, October 19th, 1986

Dear Sidi Abdul Jabbar, [Victor Danner]

Thank you for your letter. I would have written differently both to you and to Sidi Abd al-Wahid [Cyril Glasse] if I had known how radically your former opinions had changed, his within the last half year, yours no doubt over a much longer period.

Let us leave aside the question of the Avatara* [See postscript], which has no real bearing on this present issue. What immediately concerns us is a difference of opinion as to whether the Shaykh is a true Master in the sense of Shaykh al-Barakah, or whether he is merely a Muqaddam. In the latter case I agree that it would not be impossible for one of us to reach the end of the path, but it would be exceedingly improbable, and I think that you are greatly underestimating the difficulties of the suluk. God can give anyone realisation if He wills, but He normally does so through a Master. Only a true Master, that is, one who himself has reached the end of the path, and who is therefore altogether beyond any fall from Grace—only such as he is capable of being (to use the Shaykh's own words) "The continuation of the ego of the disciple." [Quotation was in French].

You and S. Abd al-Wahid hold one of the two opinions in question, I hold the other, and I claim that S. Ibrahim, to the end of his life رحمه الله ورضي عنه was in profound agreement with me. Now I simply ask you to consider objectively two points, firstly the relative qualifications of the opposing sides to form a judgement about the Shaykh based on closeness and length of contact with him, and secondly the extreme difference between the immense reasons which I have, and which S. Ibrahim had, for believing the Shaykh to be a Master in the fullest sense, and the exceedingly dubious and question-begging reasons given for holding the other view. It is true that my most powerful reasons, those that have to do with the all but fifty year intimate disciple-Master relationship that I have had with him, are not accessible to others, though I expect others to take my word for them, but in any case all the fuqara have access to his method, the texts, and the spiritual civilisation he has given us. I will add also his books, since these unlike most other books do in fact "prove" his holiness of being a Master, for there are many passages in them which could only have been written by a true Master. These "proofs" are on a totally different scale form the various isolated incidents, all open to more than one interpretation, which form the basis of criticisms made against him. How is it that both S. Ibrahim and I failed and fail to see "the innumerable defects of character" that you speak of, and his "countless misdeeds"?

And how is it that you fail to see what we saw and see? For you the Shaykh "has no sense of morality at all"; for us he is no less than the mouthpiece of Heaven in respect of morality for the present age, and God is not so poor as to have to make do with a monstrous hypocrite for this purpose!

Moreover it would be an error to suppose that we are ignorant of any facts that you may have in mind. Like many other Masters the Shaykh has never had a "private life" in the ordinary sense, for he has always felt the need to share his life at least with some of the older fuqara.

With every good wish.

والسلام من الفقير الى ربه أبي بكر سراج الدين

P.S. What you call "Avatarism" seems to have become a little out of control in some quarters. The Shaykh has discouraged it, and it is indeed unnecessary, even something of a "luxury". Avatara is not a term I normally use myself, and when I do so, it is more often than not prompted by the terminology of those of the friends with whom I may be speaking. But in any case, as regards the present issue, there is not a vast difference between your phrase "an Avatara in the full sense of the term" and with all that this implies, and substitute for it, "a Master in the full sense, with all that this implies", for [in French, "not only to the great teachers who had an "apostolic" rank, but even (quite near to the rank of) the founding Avatara, that is where there's a compensatory truth, which allows one to better appreciate the veneration of a Master, in India, as well as elsewhere."] In this connection, I am told that the Hindus speak of Major and minor Avataras, and there can be no doubt that a Rasul must be ranked as a major Avatara. I assume that the Anbiya عليهم الصلاة والسلام would have the degree of minor ones. According to a hadith much quoted in Sufism "the Saints of my people are as the Prophets of the sons of Bani Israel." There are also the degrees of Bodhisattvahood. As to exact correlations, one can only say Allahu Alam.

END OF LETTER

The dear and brilliant Martin Lings (Sidi Abu Bakr) appeals to his interlocutors to believe in all the things which covered up the lack of "any moral sense at all" for him and for many, from: 1. The books and, 2. The civilisation (Yes, that was pretty much the right word for the way of life we led—full of traditional beauty, virgin nature and aristocratic yet simple ways of life) and from, 3. The subjective views of many long time fuqara like him, one would arrive at a false conclusion.

Sidi Abu Bakr also says that he and Sidi Ibrahim were aware of incidents capable of more than one interpretation: He was wrong about that. There were incidents and ways of being—some he did not know. Others, he refused to believe. That was understandable. رحمه الله

Lings, Nasr and Burckhardt were too good to notice the devil, but they were also fools. I can't complain, having been one. A funny fact you can add: Ronda, my honest psychic friend, saw a picture of the very saintly Titus Burckhardt. (I was testing her and learning; but teaching her too, because she'd never seen people as "large" or complex as any of those in my life). She said he was brilliant, and an angel; but also a fool!

PROOF

Appendix V
Muhammad's Predictions About These End Times We Are In Now

Many predictions are found in the chapters, called "Fitan," that are in the six great collections of hadith (the sayings of Muhammad): Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, etc. Bukhari's are pretty well-summarized in volume two of the easily obtained book, *A History of the Prophets of Islam*, by Suzanne Haneef. From memory, here are many, with my commentary in square brackets:

- A time will come when there will be floods, earthquakes, droughts and severe phenomena. If it were not for the animals, God would be so angry with mankind, that it would never rain again.
- Men will sleep with men, and women with women; and that will result in new diseases, that the world will not have seen before. [This could mean that total moral degeneration of many kinds will be responsible for the new diseases we are seeing; but God know best.]
- Knowledge of Islam will be exceedingly reduced, such that Islam will seem to be a stranger, like it was when it first appeared.
- The worst among you will become your leaders. [Now, right now, we see this in politics; however, where it counts infinitely more, is in false *spiritual* leaders, in all religions. Parents aren't doing so well either. We are approaching *only one* heresy, in Sufism, or say it is a heresy in universalism within all esoterisms. That means that the falsehood is not just within Islamic esoterism. There are countless other false leaders. When a false leader speaks right to the spirit, or heart, of those who are gifted with intellectual intuition. Then he is creating a heresy that appeals to the apparent "cream of the intellectual crop." They are not *really* the cream of any crop however, unless they follow the truth, and

make their characters good. But also, even forgetting about the cream, there are fine people, more like milk—they are good, and there are more of them. Those people are longing to be broad-minded and to see good in many religions. A *false* (not a true) universalism, perennialism, or traditionalism quite appeals to what is good in them. As an extreme example, think of the false impression that poor interpretations of Jalal ad-Din Rumi make in the West.]

- Women will rule. [That doesn't necessarily mean just that they'll rule countries; they'll also rule over their husbands, offices, organizations and everywhere.]
- There will be women singers.
- Laws will no longer be based on the Quran; and that will result in Muslims fighting Muslims.
- Knowledge will no longer be for the faith. [We go as far as China to learn technology. Now science, up to a point, is included in religion; but see the works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an unsurpassable expert on religion and science. The big question is: "When should we stop exploiting the material world?"; and the answer is: "We should have stopped long ago!"]
- The barefoot and the naked will compete against one another in the construction of high buildings. [This means that the lowest classes of people will be wealthy and compete with one another in construction. And God knows best.]
- The social classes will be confused. [A servant may be noble and her mistress ignoble.]
- A man will obey his wife, while disobeying his mother.
- Ash-Sham [which includes Syria and parts of other countries] will be destroyed.
- Cities will be destroyed; but new cities will be built in deserts. [Like Abu Dhabi and Dubai.]
- People with clothes on, will be naked. [In tight-fitting, low cut and/or transparent clothes, as most of us see daily.]
- Honesty will be lost, and the wealthy will be the least generous. (1% of the people hold 99% of the world's wealth, no?).

These signs will all appear before the major ones, some of which may be hard to interpret. The Book of Daniel, the Apocalypse and the Book of Revelations are both of signs too; but they need scholars to interpret them. The above minor predictions from Islam are easy to grasp; but I don't know what the major signs mean.

So what should we do when we see that these predictions have been fulfilled—like right now? There are only a few, but crystal clear, orders: Do not

stay in the community anymore; forget (most) others, and do not try to fight (argue, preach, convince, pay, help in the large community)—no! Be passive, non-violent. Strike your sword on stones (to break it) because, if you get involved, you will find yourselves in situations from which you cannot escape. The more passive you are then, the better: Walk, don't run; and sit, don't stand. Be uninvolved in every way possible. Go into your house, and lock the door; just pray (etc.) until death comes to you. *Or:* Take a herd of sheep or goats to a valley or to a mountain top. Pray, isolated there, until death comes.

There are surely vocational exceptions and necessities; but these are the general orders. Another, that may seem paradoxical, is: Even if you think the world will end tomorrow, plant a tree!

Now yes, we are in the predicted End Time, and yes, we should not get involved, talk, preach, try to help the generality of mankind. They will drag us down, ruin us. But we *should* still be involved with the kind of people who are "knocking"—as in the words of Christ: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Those are the ones we *should* stay involved with, cooperate with, help and share with. The difference between the two types of people was given in the two verses from the Bible: The knock and it shall be opened verse, which shows us we should be open to seekers; and the verse "Cast not your pearls before swine," which indicates the kinds of people who will take advantage of us, profane our gifts of whatever kind. And only God knows the full purport of these predictions, and of many others.

Now here are some actual quotes from the Quran and ahadith, and my commentary in square brackets:

> According to the Quran, on the Last Day the Prophet will say that his own people will have abandoned the Quran: "My Lord, my people treat this Quran as something to be ignored…" [It is also revealed in the hadiths that, during the End Times, the Quran's guidance will be disregarded and people will stray from it.]
>
> (Surat al-Furqan: 30)

> Near the establishment of the Hour there will be days during which (religious) knowledge will be taken away (vanish) and general ignorance will spread...
>
> (Bukhari)

> There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of the Quran except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name and they will call themselves by this name even though they are the people furthest from it.
>
> (Ibn Babuya, Thawab ul-A'mal)

> There will come a time upon the Ummat when people will recite the

Quran, but it will not go further than their throats (into their hearts). [It will be a sign of the Last Day that after Allah has completely revealed in the Quran what is lawful and what is forbidden, laws and commands will be given that are not essential to religion.]

(Bukhari)

A time will come when a man will not care about how he gets things, whether lawful or unlawful. [Allah's Messenger revealed to us that, in the End Times, some people acknowledged as scholars will actually be two-faced impostors.]

(Bukhari)

Wolves will give readings in the End Times. Let those who come to see those times seek shelter from their evil in Allah. They will be very corrupt people. Hypocrisy will prevail, and nobody will be ashamed of it and its manifestations.

(Tirmidhi, Nawadir al-'usul)

There will appear in latter times a people who will gain this world with the help of religion.

(Tirmidhi)

Allah's Messenger said: "In the End Times men will come forth who will fraudulently use religion for worldly ends and wear sheepskins in public to display meekness. Their tongues will be sweeter than sugar, but their hearts will be the hearts of wolves." [Those people described are those who show no respect for the laws of Islam and who do not hesitate to use religion as a means for their own profit.]

(Tirmidhi)

The Last Hour will not be established until there will remain those people who will neither be aware of virtues nor prevent vices. [It is a sign that the Doomsday is approaching when people know that Allah has commanded them to prefer goodness and shun evil, but do not observe it.]

(Ahmad)

The Hour will come when leaders are oppressors.

(Al-Haythami, Kitab al-Fitan)

There will come a time for my people when… the mosques will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance.

(Ibn Babuya, Thawab ul-A'mal)

A time will come when the hypocrites will live secretly among you, and

the faithful will try to live their religion in secret among others.
(Agreed upon)

A time will come upon people in which they will use the Masjid as a pavilion (a meeting place) [i.e. mosques and Islamic schools will be made into places used only as social gatherings.]
(Narrated by Hasan r.a.)

Let him who reads the Quran ask (his reward) from Allah. Because in the final times there will be many people who read the Quran and seek their reward from other people. [People will appear who read the Quran for profit rather than to gain Allah's approval.]
(Tirmidhi)

When the Quran is read as if singing a song, and when a person is esteemed for reading in that way, even though he is not knowledgeable.
(Al-Tabarani, Al-Kabir)

The Hour will come, when people believe in the stars and reject al-Qadar (the Divine Decree of destiny).
(Al-Haythami, Kitab al-Fitan)

Undoubtedly, a period will come upon people wherein not a single person will be saved from indulging in interest. If anyone avoids direct indulgence in interest, yet he will not escape from the smoke (effects) thereof... Its effects will somehow reach him.
(Narrated by Abu Hurairah)

The day of Judgment will not come until the very lowest people are the happiest.
(Tirmidhi)

In the End Times, people will be carrying out their trade but hardly will there be a trustworthy person.
(Bukhari and Muslim)

Verily in the presence of the Last Hour, there would be… false testimony and concealing evidence.
(Ahmad and Hakim)

When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday). [The only measure by which people will be judged will be wealth, respect being dependent on how rich a person is.]

(Bukhari)

A man is unfilial towards his mother, and drives his father far off...
(Tirmidhi)

When the old have no compassion for the young, when the young show no respect to the old… when children grow angry… Judgment is at hand.
(Reported by Umar r.a.)

Divorces will be a daily occurrence.
('Allamah Safarini, Ahwal Yaum al-Qiyamah)

There will be an abundance of illegitimate children.
(Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Muntakhab Kanzul Ummaal)

Meanness and greed will multiply.
(Muslim, Ibn Majah)

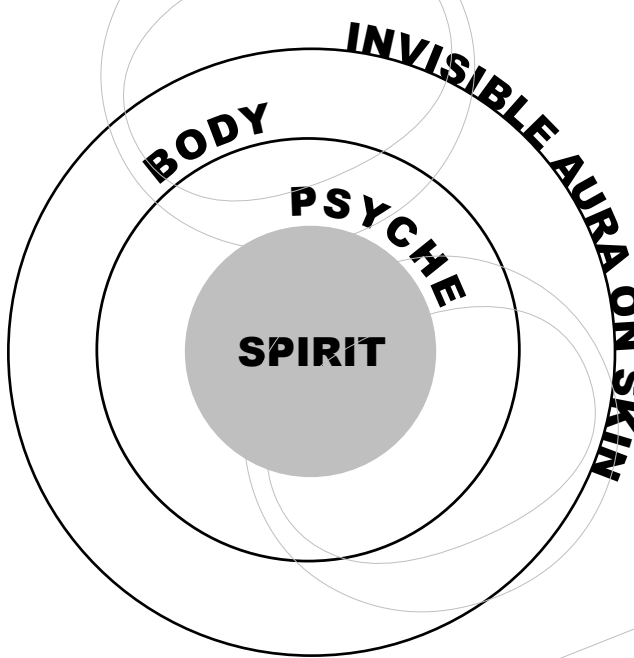
At that time, people will sell their religion for a small amount of worldly goods.
(Ahmad)

Deceit and cheating will be common.
('Allamah Safarini, Ahwal Yaum al-Qiyamah)

Bribes will be called gifts, and will be considered lawful.
(Amal al-Din al-Qazwini,
Mufid al-'ulum wa-mubid al-humum)

Appendix VI
A Chart of Human Zones

A chart of the zones in human beings as drawn for me by "the Shaykh".



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Appendix VII
Corroborating Evidence

The author disassociates herself from this whole section, while admitting that the pictures and many of the words reproduced here from the dossier produced by Aldo Vidali[119] confirm what she has written in the book. Her reason is that the truth is mixed with falsehood—albeit sometimes unintentionally. The texts are also too lacking in beauty. It is possible, but God knows best, that there was a "rash" of scandal sheets, written by people who left the "Tariqah," due to the eclecticism, which René Guénon wrote about, saying that subtle forces could be released due to the mixing of sacred forms.

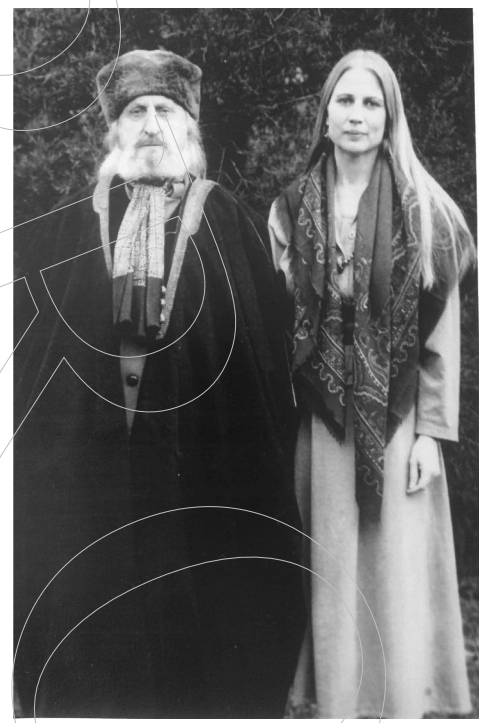
119 https://archive.org/details/KoslowAppendixTheEmperorsNewClothes

Schuon Family

This was the family, or "entourage," in Switzerland: From right to left: Frithjof Schuon, Catherine Schuon, John Murray, Maude Murray, Whitall Perry and Barbara Perry. This picture was taken in Bloomington, soon after we arrived from Switzerland, and before we knew the fourth "wife." Barbara Perry and I were legally and spiritually married to the husbands we lived with—albeit "the Shaykh" called us his wives, and he had put new wedding rings on our hands. Those looked exactly like our old rings; and he never told our husbands that we were "his." Sadly, Catherine Schuon and Whitall Perry had also been permitted to be naked together for some ten years, as they had fallen in love. She thoroughly repented; but the Perrys' daughter found out about the mixed up marriages and was deeply distressed. As concerned the fuqara, we were three dignified, highly respectable and devoted couples. Catherine and Barbara were about 15 years younger than he was. I was 30 years younger. His fourth wife was 45 years younger.

The first two wives, Catherine Schuon (Sayyidah Latifah) and Barbara Perry (Sayyidah Hamidah). They disputed for eight years, before I came; but everything seemed so lovely! Barbara Perry was not told if she was a wife or what, until I came. She never asked.

They were beautiful, intelligent and talented women; and each one was my best friend in a different way. Sayyidah Latifah was still alive a few months ago, at age 95. I talked to her and we exchanged letters; but there was no way to see eye to eye. Only when I was outside the "Tariqah" did I realize that nearly everyone had an extremely difficult character—still, even in the Next World, I'd love to have sister-wives—in harmony!



My dear little cabbage (Sharlyn Romaine, or Sayyidah Badriyyah) with him. She was the most precious young woman imaginable: Natural, naïve, innocent, intelligent, and almost his equal for talents! I adored her for the first five years. Then, she changed suddenly, just when everyone adored her. She was only the one who encouraged him to manifest publicly, the exact same character he had in Switzerland. Her love for him was absolute, as was his for her; and for him as well as for the society, she became the embodiment of esoterism with her dancing, which was performed in a perfectly sacred manner; but naked—audaciously against the "taste" of God, Who decreed "what pleaseth Me;" and that meant great modesty. Actually shyness or modesty ("haya" has a broad and deep meaning in Arabic) is the specific virtue of Islam. She was naked and indecent in so many places—combining the sacred with the forbidden. Very unfortunately, she died early of cancer, after terrible suffering, which could have purified her.

When I was over sixty, I adopted the ten children of a servant I loved, who became deathly ill; and I lived with a married daughter, named Qadri (That means "my destiny"). I named one of her daughters after my dearest friend and last sister-wife, Badriyyah. In my old age, I received people and places, situations and spiritual guidance, better than I could have imagined!

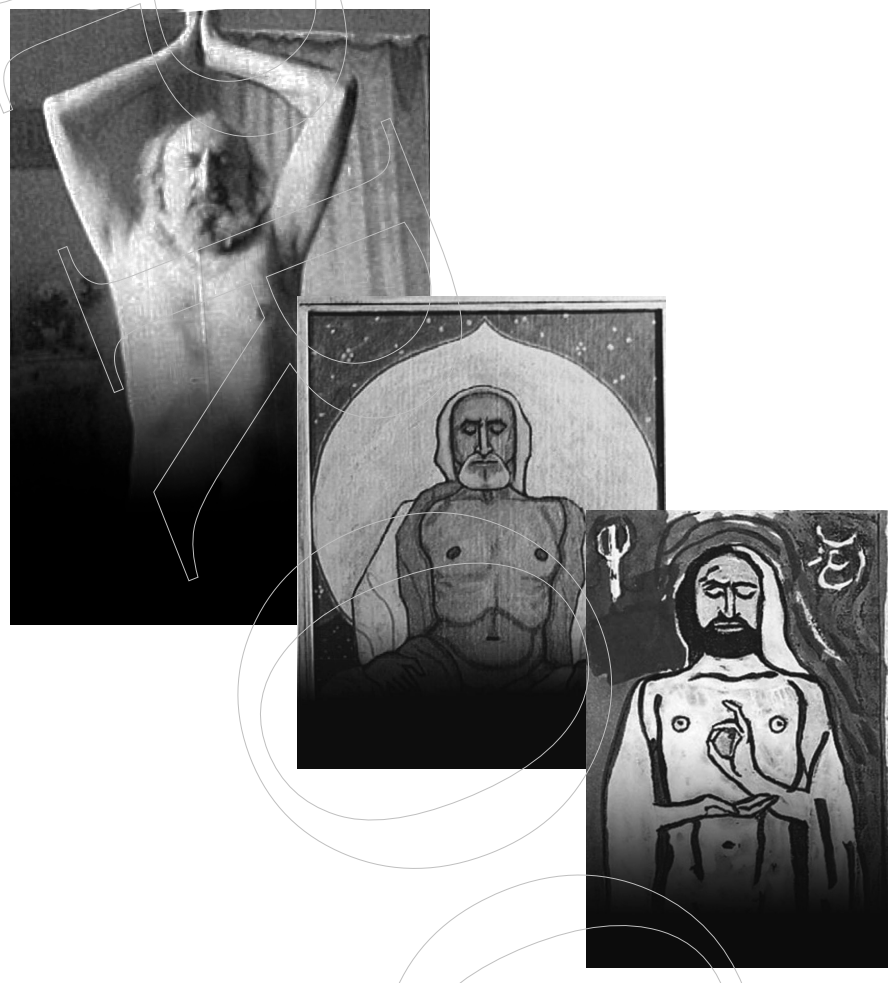
Schuon and his Companions

Frithjof Schuon, the great heretic, with René Guénon, the bastion of orthodoxy and the true representative of traditionalism. This picture, taken before Guénon realized that his former friend was astray, is often used to prove that they were alike!

Right to left: In Egypt, Whitall N. Perry, unknown, René Guénon, Martin Lings. Guénon's written letters denouncing Schuon were dated 1950, but showed that he had understood long before that date. In 1984, Frithjof Schuon, with Martin Lings "beside him" broke with Guénon too.

This is Sidi Xyz, with the saintly Indian Chief, Thomas Yellowtail and his wife Suzie. At this time, Sidi Xyz was a very fine person! Several people changed after being too long "in the center"—meaning that they lived very near "the Shaykh," and became liars as time went on. May they reverse their paths!

A well-dressed Indian Day, behind the Shaykh's house. Sayyidah Badriyyah is dancing, quite well-dressed by her standards; and I am on the far left reaching towards Catherine Schuon.



There were hundreds of pictures of him naked, taken by his second wife, Barbara Perry. There are also maybe 100 "icons" of him, naked, painted by the fourth wife, who was a painter as talented as he was. In Bloomington, there was an "icon" in every house, and we all had photographs of him naked too. These were all considered blessings. My publisher has quite rightly veiled the nudity in the photographs and in the icons.

Due to veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary, named "Maryam" in the Quran, there are none of the so-called "icons" of her, painted totally naked, by Frithjof Schuon. Albeit he claimed to have been adopted by her, as her "little child," he paints himself as a grown, very manly-looking man, beside her thigh. He often became "childlike" as a veil for the sexuality which he wove into the spiritual life.

Third Wife

The Court Case

by Aldo Vidali
1992

Declaration

On March 4, 1989 I visited Frithjof Schuon, a cult leader, at his house at 3700 Inverness Farm Road, Bloomington, Indiana. It was late morning. I was received in Schuon's study upstairs. As we were talking there was a sudden entrance of Jasmine Hickey, a 15-year old girl daughter of members of the Schuon Cult. She was completely nude. Shocked at my unexpected presence, she left as quickly as she had entered. Schuon turned to me and said. "Alhamdu lillah (Arabic for "God be praised"). Woman's beauty is Allah's greatest gift."

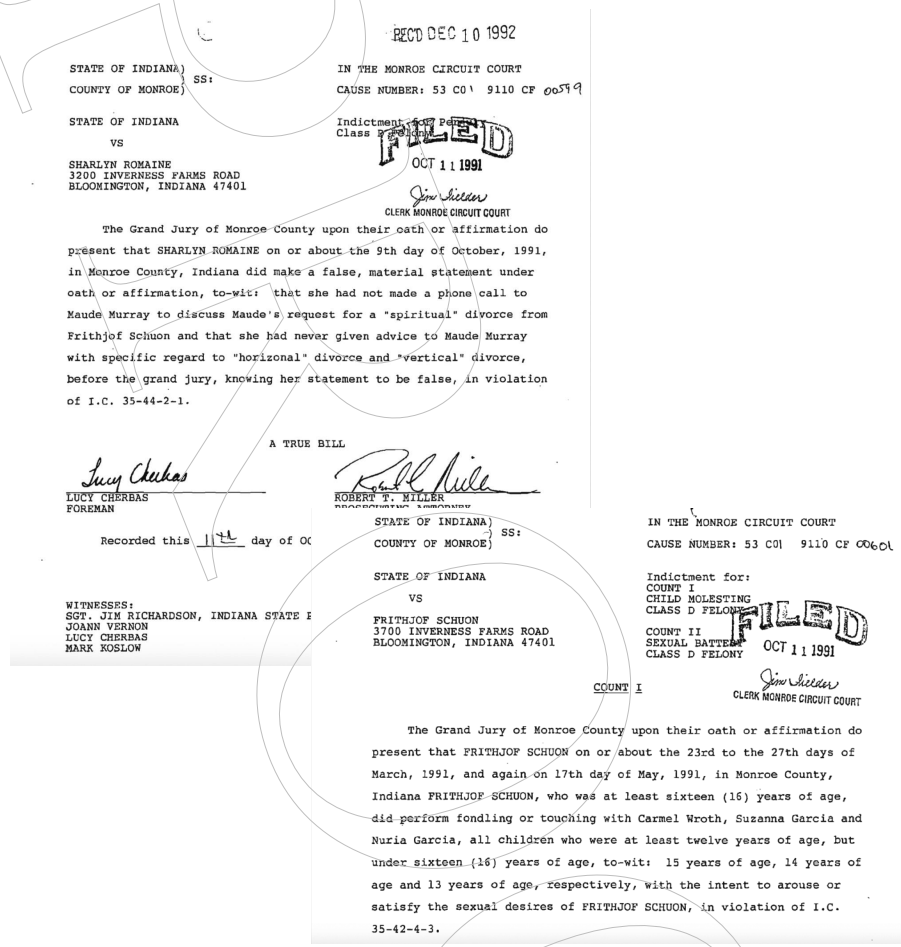
I responded: "Alhamdu lillah." He proceeded to speak of "sacred" sexuality to the effect that erotic feelings are glimpses of paradise. Upon leaving Schuon asked for a promise of absolute discretion on what I had seen and heard during that audience. All of which seemed innocent enough from a spiritual master, as a number of renown men had claimed he was for many years. At the time I was convinced that, as author Whithall Perry and other famous men had assured me, Schuon was a genuine Sufi Shaykh anointed by the famous Algerian Saint Shaykh Al Alawi. Therefore I believed he was speaking with detachment about beauty and I believed the girl was there as a model for his paintings.

I was reinforced in that last belief in that before I left Schuon gave me a small photo reproduction of one of the miniatures of the girl (copy attached) he had painted.

I had already seen several such miniatures at the apartment of Gustavo Polit, then about 42 years old and the closest and favorite disciple and principal functionary of the Schuon Cult. Polit told me Schuon had painted Jasmine for him as a consolation since he (Polit) would have to wait a long time yet to marry her. Marriage was planned when the girl turned 18 years old.

During one of my visits to Polit's one bedroom apartment at 762 Ridgecrest Court, Bloomington IN 47401, a day or two later I witnessed Jasmine sharing the same bedroom with Polit. The girl came out of the bedroom and into the bathroom wearing a man's robe. I said nothing knowing the girl was there with the permission of her parents. I never understood why they permitted their daughter to spend her days at Polit's Bloomington apartment and subsequently permitted her visits to him in California. The only reason I can

Aldo Vidali, who wrote this, came shortly after I had moved away from my house, which was dead on center, in the middle of the houses which belonged to the people most astray. There was one exception: Stanley Jones, who owned the house with an enormous room for majalis. He had a lovely character; but also had the most impressive visions, which seemed to prove that the "the Shaykh" was great, and that his ideas and views of the Virgin Mary were correct. Once, Sayyidah Latifah and I saw him in ecstasy, while we were all invoking in a majalis—and that was a tremendous experience for us. We saw him transformed, in a state that was awe-some! However, Stanley Jones finally understood and left; so now more lies are told about why he isn't there!



RECD DEC 10 1992

STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF MONROE)

IN THE MONROE CIRCUIT COURT
CAUSE NUMBER: 53 C01 9110 CF 00579

STATE OF INDIANA
VS
SHARLYN ROMAINE
3200 INVERNESS FARMS ROAD
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47401

Indictment for: Perjury
Class D Felony

FILED
OCT 11 1991
CLERK MONROE CIRCUIT COURT

The Grand Jury of Monroe County upon their oath or affirmation do present that SHARLYN ROMAINE on or about the 9th day of October, 1991, in Monroe County, Indiana did make a false, material statement under oath or affirmation, to-wit: that she had not made a phone call to Maude Murray to discuss Maude's request for a "spiritual" divorce from Frithjof Schuon and that she had never given advice to Maude Murray with specific regard to "horizonal" divorce and "vertical" divorce, before the grand jury, knowing her statement to be false, in violation of I.C. 35-44-2-1.

A TRUE BILL

LUCY CHERBAS
FOREMAN

ROBERT T. MILLER

Recorded this 11th day of OC

WITNESSES:
SGT. JIM RICHARDSON, INDIANA STATE P
JOANN VERNON
LUCY CHERBAS
MARK KOSLOW

STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF MONROE)

IN THE MONROE CIRCUIT COURT
CAUSE NUMBER: 53 C01 9110 CF 00601

STATE OF INDIANA
VS
FRITHJOF SCHUON
3700 INVERNESS FARMS ROAD
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47401

Indictment for:
COUNT I
CHILD MOLESTING
CLASS D FELONY

COUNT II
SEXUAL BATTERY
CLASS D FELONY

FILED
OCT 11 1991
CLERK MONROE CIRCUIT COURT

COUNT I

The Grand Jury of Monroe County upon their oath or affirmation do present that FRITHJOF SCHUON on or about the 23rd to the 27th days of March, 1991, and again on 17th day of May, 1991, in Monroe County, Indiana FRITHJOF SCHUON, who was at least sixteen (16) years of age, did perform fondling or touching with Carmel Wroth, Suzanna Garcia and Nuria Garcia, all children who were at least twelve years of age, but under sixteen (16) years of age, to-wit: 15 years of age, 14 years of age and 13 years of age, respectively, with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desires of FRITHJOF SCHUON, in violation of I.C. 35-42-4-3.

Mark Koslow, a disciple of Schuon, reported him for child molestation, after seeing him embrace girls, aged 13, 14 and 15, when they were naked to the waist at an "Indian Day." Koslow was right; but we were all told to lie and did. In the end, the charges were dropped, because Koslow had given the wrong dates for the event he had seen! The rightfully disgruntled faqir left the Tariqah; but he also spread scandal all around the world.

We also lied about the nature of three marriages—claiming that they were purely spiritual, had nothing to do with what one usually calls marriage, and therefore no divorce was needed for me to leave my marriage. Then a tape was played: The jury had an answering machine tape: On there, Sharlyn Romaine was telling me that the Shaykh could not divorce me, because he was a bodhisattva and could not cause division. (Finally, I left anyway).

APOLIS NEWS Wednesday, October 16, 1991

Sect 'leader' indicted on child molesting charges

The Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. — An 84-year-old man, said to be the leader of a religious sect, calls charges that he sexually abused three teen-age girls the result of vengeance.

A Monroe County grand jury indicted Frithjof Schuon, leader of the Mariamiah sect, on child molesting and sexual battery charges. Two members of the group, Maude Murray and Charlyn Romaine, were charged with perjuring themselves before the grand jury, authorities said.

The accused were freed on bond Tuesday evening after surrendering to authorities.

"I didn't know that such baseness and wickedness and stupidity could exist on Earth," Schuon said outside the Monroe County Jail.

The group combined elements of Islam, Hinduism and the American Indian religions, said Mark Koslow, 35, a former member of the sect who is cooperating with police.

Teen arrested after crash of stolen car

The Indianapolis News

AB The Republic, Columbus, Ind., Wednesday, October 16, 1991

Associated Press

Frithjof Schuon leaves Monroe County Jail in Bloomington Tuesday with his wife, Catherine, after his arrest following a grand jury indictment charging child molesting and sexual battery stemming from cult ceremon---

Leader of sect i on child molest

Associated Press

BLOOMINGTON — A group led by an 84-year-old man indicted for child molesting and sexual battery kept such a low profile authorities were unaware of its decade-old existence until this summer, a state police investigator said Tuesday.

A Monroe County grand jury indicted Frithjof Schuon on child molesting and sexual battery charges involving three teen-age girls.

Maude Murray and Charlyn Romaine, who authorities say are members of the Inverness Woods group known as Mariamiah, were charged with perjuring themselves before the grand jury.

The indictments, returned last week, were unsealed Monday evening.

The three are expected to surrender by the end of the week. They will face bonds of $2,000 each, Prosecutor Bob Miller said Tuesday.

"For those members who were involved, it was a religion. It's difficult to characterize it as a particular faith, since it borrowed from many," Miller said.

"It's my understandin was first formed many y it had its primary footi Islam, but over the y borrowed from various r he said.

"They've been here and I didn't find out abo July of this year," said Sgt. Jim Richardson o diana State Police post ington.

"I've received docu on how strict it was, ho swer questions to police list of things that are se said.

"I've received calls over the world, from one the United States to the o said.

The group is believed about 70 followers in th ington area, 300 nations about 1,000 worldwide, son said.

"I've had testimony ou scope of the grand jury (t consider themselves to religious, a non-tradition operating under the gu

D-4 VINCENNES SUN-COMMERCIAL, WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16, 1991

Sect leader, 'wives' freed on bond

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP) — An 84-year-old man, said to be the leader of a religious sect, calls charges that he sexually abused three teen-age girls during rites the result of vengeance.

A Monroe County grand jury indicted Frithjof Schuon, leader of the Mariamiah sect, on child molesting and sexual battery charges. Two members of the group, Maude Murray and Charlyn Romaine, were charged with perjuring themselves before the grand jury, authorities said.

The accused were freed on bond Tuesday evening after surrendering to authorities.

"I didn't know that such baseness and wickedness and stupidity could exist on Earth," Schuon said outside the Monroe County Jail.

The group combined elements of Islam, Hinduism and the American Indian, said Mark Koslow, 35, a former member if the sect who is cooperating with police.

Koslow claimed he had an affair with Murray and it possibly was this that Schuon referred to when he said: "It's a vengeance because it was a dirty love story, and I didn't agree. Because I didn't agree they want to destroy me."

Murray declined to comment.

Koslow said Schuon "believes himself to be somewhat equivalent to Christ, somewhat equivalent to Muhammad. He's compared himself to Caesar, to Alexander, to Napoleon."

Koslow claimed that in one of the sect's rituals Schuon stands in the middle of a circle of nude or scantily clad females.

"He presses up against their breasts and puts his hands around their hips," Koslow said.

He said the leader rubs against females because he believes his body is sacred and "radiates grace."

Two girls, identifying themselves and alleged victims, said Schuon never touched them.

"Koslow is crazy," said a 14-year-old. "He has made up all these lies about all of this, and it is horrible. How do you think he (Schuon) would do something like that? He's an old man."

FRITHJOF SCHUON

A 15-year-old said, "They're saying a lot of lies. None if it is true."

Romaine, when asked if Schuon molested the girls, said, "Absolutely not. It's the most preposterous thing I've ever heard."

She also rejected the idea of a cult. "There are no religious ceremonies. Period."

"I feel comfortable that all of the allegations were fully investigated and that this pretty much completes the case," Monroe County Prosecutor Bob Miller said Tuesday.

A state police investigator said authorities were unaware of the group's existence until July when a complaint surfaced.

"It's my understanding when it (Mariamiah) was first formed many years ago, it had its primary footing within Islam, but over the years it has borrowed from various religions," Miller said.

The indictments against Schuon allege that on March 23-27 and again on May 17 he improperly touched or fondled three girls ages 13 to 15 and compelled the girls "to submit to touching by force or imminent threat of force, to wit, by undue cult influences and cult pressures."

The perjury charges stem from allegations that two "spiritual wives" of Schuon lied to the grand jury about their relationship with Schuon, Richardson said. He said Schuon also had a third spiritual wife and a civil wife.

The indictments, returned last week, were unsealed Monday evening.

Miller said each count is a Class D felony punishable by up to three years in prison and a fine of $10,000 upon conviction.

The group meets in a private home in a secluded neighborhood and reportedly includes many affluent professionals, including doctors and lawyers.

"They've been here 10 years, and I didn't find out about it until July of this year," said Det. Sgt. Jim Richardson of the state police post at Bloomington.

"I've received documentation on how strict it was, how to answer questions to police, a whole list of things that are secret," he said. "I've received calls from all over the world, from one coast of the United States to the other."

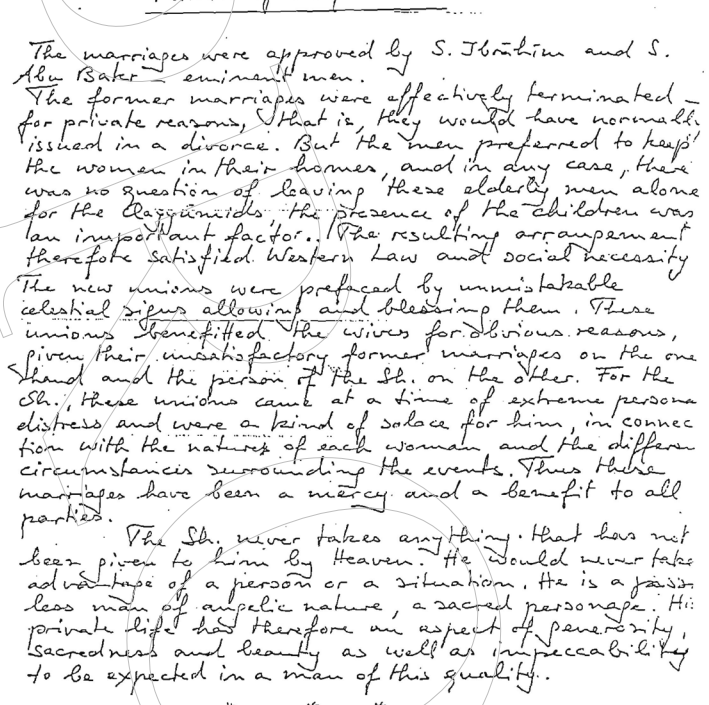
The group is believed to have about 70 followers in the Bloomington area, 300 nationwide and about 1,000 worldwide, Richardson said.

Richardson said the teens and their parents were followers of Schuon, who is believed to be a German native who lived in several areas including the Middle East, Richardson said. Schuon moved to Monroe County from Switzerland about 10 years ago, the officer said.

Schuon was also known by the Islamic name of Shaykh Isa Nurradin Achmed, he said.

"He has had a following for a lengthy period of time. He's a noted author to a select group," Richardson said.

The case generated lots of local news but many people did not take it seriously. Even today, people think that a venerable philosopher went through an ordeal of suffering after despicable accusations. Indeed, Frithjof Schuon lied in televised interviews, describing his great trial. Mark Koslow saw the Shaykh embrace many bare-breasted wives of fuqara, when three underage girls were included. Yes, he saw it; and we all knew that those young girls had been embraced upon several occasions; but we were told to lie under oath in the Grand Jury hearing.



Points of Reference

The marriages were approved by S. Ibrāhim and S. Abu Baker — eminent men.
The former marriages were effectively terminated — for private reasons, that is, they would have normally issued in a divorce. But the men preferred to keep the women in their homes, and in any case, there was no question of leaving these elderly men alone for the Dajjāmids. The presence of the children was an important factor. The resulting arrangement therefore satisfied Western Law and social necessity.
The new unions were prefaced by unmistakable celestial signs allowing and blessing them. These unions benefitted the wives for obvious reasons, given their unsatisfactory former marriages on the one hand and the person of the Sh. on the other. For the Sh., these unions came at a time of extreme personal distress and were a kind of solace for him, in connection with the natures of each woman and the different circumstances surrounding the events. Thus these marriages have been a mercy and a benefit to all parties.
The Sh. never takes anything that has not been given to him by Heaven. He would never take advantage of a person or a situation. He is a passionless man of angelic nature, a sacred personage. His private life has therefore an aspect of generosity, sacredness and beauty as well as impeccability to be expected in a man of this quality.

* * *

This was written by Catherine Schuon, before the last wife came, so it is only justifying the marriages of myself and Barbara Perry. It's full of lies and way out on Pluto! We were legally and spiritually married and not a single thing said that we were the wives of Frithjof Schuon, except his word. He did not tell our husbands that we were his wives, did not take any responsibility either. Actually, all three of us extra wives had two husbands for awhile; and before any of us, his best friend and disciple used to loan his wife to the Shaykh for all night "visits." Strangely, there was a psychic atmosphere of spiritual beauty—in dreams and locutions, later proven false. He had a sense of the sacred, and spiritual beauty got mixed into his desires, so sexuality became mixed in his spiritual "experiences" and in his doctrines. When he wanted something, or to be someone, he or a disciple would dream that he was that—so when he fell in love with me, he had a locution. A voice in his chest, said in French: "She will be yours in the here below and in the Hereafter!" God forbid; but there was so much beauty around that everything seemed justified. If anything had beauty, he thought he could have it, because Plato said, "Beauty is the splendor of the true." That's often true, but God did not say it; and it cannot be used as a principle of esoterism because Frithjof Schuon said so either!

Third Wife

The end... Ameen.

These are scenes of the Funeral for Frithjof Schuon, which was attended by people of several different religions. You see Seyyed Hossein Nasr there; and he gave the Funeral address. Beside him, in one picture is a man in black, wearing a beret: He is John Murray, who was my legal husband and companion for 24 years. Frithjof Schuon died in 1998. I left in 1992. In one picture you see the three wives sitting beside one another, close to the coffin. The one with long, straight hair is Sharlyn Romaine; then you see Barbara Perry, and then Catherine Schuon.

Appendix VIII
Quotations from the Masters of Tasawwuf

"The taçawwuf is the station of excellence (al-ihsan) in Islam, it is attachment to divine law and it is neither miracle nor prodigy, for even perverts or miscreants can perform wonders. Righteousness is better than a thousand miracles."

(Sheikh al-'Alawi rady Allahu`anhu)

"I have known many novices who failed to strictly observe the sharia; they eventually left the Tariqa and were dispossessed of the lights of Supreme Reality (Haqiqa). I have known others who have been in the company of the saints for a long time without being touched by their grace. The reason is none other than their failure to respect the sharia. And I swear that it is only through that sharia that all the favours we have received and all our spiritual gains have been realized."

(Ibn Ajiba rady Allahu`anhu in his commentary
of the Hikam(s) of Ibn Ata'Allah rady Allahu`anhu)

"The closest to God is the one who, in secret, contemplates, and who, when he is outside, draws from the sources of the Law. This kind of person gets the entire inheritance. He is filled with the greatest riches, because he follows in the footsteps of the Beloved (Al-Habib: one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad salla-Llâhu `alayhi wa sallam)."

(Ibn Ajiba rady Allahu `anhu)

Some advice that Mawlana Sheikh Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani (rady Allâhu `anhu) gave to Kwaja Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband al-Uwaysi (rady

Allahu`anhu) during an unveiling to reach the greatest of proximities with The Divine:

> "You have to show constancy and you have to be firm in following the Divine Law (sharia) of the Prophet in all your states. You have to command what is good, and forbid wrong' [3:110, 114, Quran] and keep to the highest standard of the sharia, and leave the dispensations of ease, and throw away innovation in all its forms, and make your Qiblah the Prophet's Narrations (Hadith). You have to investigate his (saws) life (sirah) and the sira of His Companions (ra), and urge people to follow and to read the Qur'an both day and night, and to perform the prayers with all their supererogatory worship (nawafil). Do not ignore even the smallest thing from what the Prophet (saws) has shown us of deeds and good works."

The *total* submission (facts, gestures, clothing, ibada, etc.) to Sayyidina Rasulullah is expressed in the Holy Quran in the verse:

> "Say: 'If you love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins.'"
>
> (Excerpt from *Spiritual Teaching, Treatises, Letters, Prayers and Sentences* by Junayd, translation by Roger Deladrière, p.185)

> "It is appropriate for the one who begins in this way, to have a correct faith, which is the first base of all things, by following the beliefs of our pious predecessors (As-Salaf As-Sâlih), the people of the Sunnah, the Sunnah of the prophets and messengers, that of the companions, the successors (tabi`în), the allies of God and the truthful."
>
> (Sheikh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, in Ghunyat At-Tâlibîn)

> "Any truth for which the law does not testify is zandaqah (hypocritical disbelief). Travels to the True (Al-Haqq) by flapping wings of the Koran and Sunnah. And stand before Him, hand in hand with the Messenger of Allâh, peace and God's blessing upon him."
>
> (Sheikh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî,
> in Al-Fath Ar-Rabbânî wal-Fayd Ar-Rahmânî)

> "Forgetting the imposed works of worship is a disbelief. Falling into the forbidden is a sin. No one has the right to forsake [divine] Orders no matter what.
>
> "If the Murid (disciple of a sheikh, aspiring to spiritual education) sees an error on the part of his Sheikh, he must point it out to him. If he discontinues his mistake, so much the better. Otherwise, he (the disciple) must leave his Sheikh's directions and follow the shar` (Islamic law)."
>
> (Sheikh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, in Adab Al-Murîd)

> "If a breach occurs within your limits, know that you have been seduced and become a puppet played by demons. Return to the status of the Law (shar`) and turn away from the opinion suggested by passion. For every truth (haqîqa) of which the Law (shari`â) does not bear witness is only libertine (zandaqa). And Allâh knows best!"
>
> (Sheikh `Abd Al-Qâdir Al-Jîlânî, in L'Accès au Mystère – 40ème discours : Quand le sâlik est-il apte à rejoindre le groupe des êtres spirituels? – p.177, translation and commentary by N. Badrawî)

> "Do not oppose people's [spiritual] states until they contradict the Shar`. If they ever deviate from the Shar`, leave them and follow the Shar`."
>
> (Sheikh Ahmad Ar-Rifâ`î rady Allahu `anhu)

> "He who studies jurisprudence (tafaqqaha) and does not practice Sufism (taçawwuf) is a pervert (fâsiq); and he who practices Sufism and does not study (does not learn, does not apply) jurisprudence is a heretic (zindîq); he who combines the two, reaches the truth or is the perfect realized (tahaqqaqa)."
>
> (Imâm Mâlik Ibn Anas rady Allahu `anhu)

Sheikh Ibn 'Arabî said in all that is attributed to him as words, "anâ abra'u ilâ-Llâh min kulli mâ yukhâlifu Kitâba-Llâh wa sunnati rasûli-Llâh sallâhou'alayhi wa sallam", "I am innocent before Allâh of all that could differ from the Book of Allâh and the Sunna of the Envoy of Allâh—on him grace and peace!"

On every occasion Ibn 'Arabî shows himself to be respectful of propriety, he never deviates in any way from the traditional teaching expressed by the Quran and the Sunna.

Sheikh Elîsh rady Allâhu `anhu recalled the eminent orthodoxy of the Sheikh al-Akbar (Ibn al-Arabi): "He was strongly attached to divine revelation and prophetic tradition and said: 'He who takes his distance from the balance of the sacred law for a single moment will perish.'"

Ibn Arabî, Futûhât 181, excerpts:

> "(Spiritual) Masters may be of either of two types ('alâ hâlayn): 1) First of all, there are those who, knowing the Book and the Sunna, profess them externally and realize them internally, respecting the limits established by Allah, fulfilling the covenant made with Him, and applying the prescriptions of the Law, without resorting to interpretations to come to accept what is doubtful, and being concerned not to neglect any duty, staying away from troubled people, caring for the community, not going so far as to hate disobedient people, yet "loving what Allah loves and hating what Allah hates". (Hadith), "not fearing to be blamed by creatures" (Cor. 5:54) when it comes to the things of Allah,

"recommending good and defending evil" – evil recognized as such by all – "and hastening to do good works" (Cor. 3:114), "forgiving men" (Cor. 3:14), (3, 134), "respecting the great, having pity on the weak" (Hadith), "removing the obstacles of the path (or Path)" (Hadith) – the way of God as well as the way of men, exhorting to the good in the sense of what is most necessary at each moment, giving each one due, being kind with one's brothers, or rather with all mankind."

(René Guénon,
Sheikh `Abd al-Wâhid Yahyâ rady Allâhu `anhu)

"We will say first of all to express things in the simplest way, that we do not build on emptiness; yet a purely secular existence, from which all traditional elements are excluded, is really only empty and void in this respect. If you want to build a building, you must first establish its foundations; these are the essential foundation on which the whole building, including its highest parts, will be built and will always remain so, even when it is completed. Similarly, adherence to an exoterism is a prerequisite for achieving esotericism, and, moreover, it should not be believed that this exotericism can be rejected once initiation has been obtained, any more than the foundations can be removed when the building is built. We will add that, in reality, exotericism, far from being rejected, must be 'transformed' to a degree corresponding to the degree reached by the initiate, since he is becoming more and more capable of understanding the underlying reasons for it, and that, consequently, his doctrinal formulas and rites take on a much more truly important meaning for him than they can have for the simple exotericist, who is always reduced, by definition, to seeing only its external appearance, that is, what matters least about the 'truth' of the tradition considered in its entirety."

(Michel Vâlsan, Sheikh Mustafâ Abd al-Azîz rady Allâhu `anhu
Spiritual Initiation and Realization, Chapter VII –
The Need for Traditional Exotericism)

"A particular interest of this document lies in the fact that it gives a fairly good glimpse, by the example of some elements retained more specifically, how the rites and the other institutions of the common law can be interpreted and practised in a strictly initiatory and contemplative perspective. But it also allows us to become more sensitively aware of the spiritual Science from which sacred institutions proceed, and consequently of the 'non-human Wisdom' on which the whole traditional order rests. Moreover, the exoteric rites and the traditional rules of life established by the General Law are not just 'good prescriptions for exoterists', but complete spiritual institutions, which in their interior aspects are true initiatory mysteries; to these institutions all members of the community, both 'people from the inside' (ahlu-l-bâtin), esoterists, as well as 'people from the outside' (ahlu-zh-zhâhir), exoterists, are also

subject, it being understood that the final profit will vary indefinitely with individual cases and states. The Sheikh al-Akbar (ibn ul-Arabi) explains elsewhere (Futûhât, ch. 62–63) that the Sharî'ah, the Apparent Way or the General Law is a Haqîqah, Fundamental Reality, from among the haqâi'q (fundamental realities). He also says: 'There is no haqîqah that opposes a Sharî'ah, for the Sharî'ah is one of the haqâ'iq, and the haqâ'iq are analogous and similar…'"

(Michel Vâlsan, Une instruction sur les Rites fondamentaux de l'Islam [excerpt from the Introductory Note], Revue Études Traditionnelles n° 369, Jan–Feb. 1962. p.23)

Radi allahu`anhum ajma'in!

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September, 1956. Maude Murray is an ordinary student settling into Harvard University — until a fateful encounter with a brilliant, young Muslim professor, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, talking about God. This chance meeting thrusts her into the world of an 'unsurpassable spiritual master': none other than the Muslim Shaykh and philosopher, Frithjof Schuon.

It is only when she delves deeper into the heart of the Sufi Order, quickly becoming the third wife of Schuon, that things begin to unravel.

Murray charts the rise and fall of the Order linked to some of the finest Muslim intellectuals, like Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings and Huston Smith, who stood by their master.

The author delights readers with her exact, often humorous, observations of human life across different cultures, and provides powerful insights into her spiritual life, ending in her discovering the Truth she has been searching for lifelong.

Murray's memoir will hold particular interest for those acquainted with esoteric traditions, but even for the general reader. Third Wife promises to both edify and enthral.

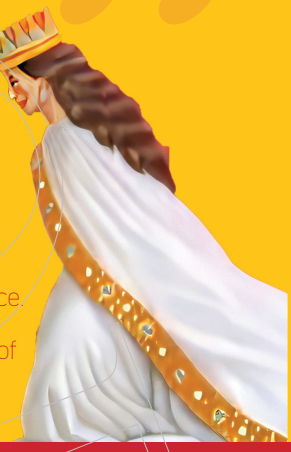
"For the first time, an insider sheds light on the secret life of Frithjof Schuon and his closest disciples - a group described by René Guénon as 'a vague organization with universalist pretensions.'"

ABOUT THE COVER ART: Here you see Queen Esther, the Jewish wife of the powerful King Ahasuerus, who, by another name, may have lived about four hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

She is approaching the king, at the risk of her life, to ask his help for the Jews, God's chosen people and the only believers in one God at that time.

Queen Esther may never have existed: Strangely, she has no importance.

The story is like a myth or an archetypical tale about God's protection of those who believe in Him. When you have finished this book, you may see why we have chosen this picture.



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